











To  
The  
Right Honourable  
Lord Balfour of Burleigh  
With the Authors  
Best respects.

Kinn  
29 September 1899



**SIR WALTER SCOTT.**







# SIR WALTER SCOTT

BY

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"Swift: The Mystery of His Life and Love."*

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## PREFACE.

To portray the characteristics of Walter Scott, one of the greatest writers and noblest characters which Europe has produced, is a difficult but fascinating study.

Lockhart and Carlyle are the two principal authorities on Scott. Concerning Lockhart's estimate of Sir Walter, Carlyle says, "that Scott is altogether lovely to him, that Scott's greatness spreads out for him on all hands beyond reach of eye, that his very faults become beautiful; his religious worldlinesses are solid prudencies, proprieties, and of the worth of him there is no measure. Scott is to Lockhart the unparalleled of the time; an object spreading out before him like a sea without shore. Of that astonishing hypothesis let expressive silence be the only answer.'

If Lockhart has *over-rated* Scott, Carlyle has *under-rated* him. He has done more than any other to detract from the fame of his illustrious countryman, and, unhappily for the cause of truth and justice, he has gained the world's ear.

If truth be spoken, Carlyle had an animus against Scott. Probably it arose from the fact that when Carlyle was comparatively unknown to fame he sent a letter to Sir Walter which was not answered, a neglect which deeply wounded the young scholar's pride. This incident reminds us of Johnson, who, in his humble days, sent a petition through Earl Gower to Swift, then in his great days of power and politics, to procure for him a degree from Trinity College, Dublin. Like Scott, Swift made no reply, a slight which Johnson never forgot and never forgave, and, like Carlyle's estimate of Scott, Johnson's estimate of Swift was as unjust as it was pitiless.

Be that as it may, this animus on the part of Carlyle utterly disqualified him, great critic and intellectual giant though he was, from being a fair interpreter of the life of Scott. I have, therefore, ventured from my own standpoint to give a sketch of Scott, intellectually and socially, and have endeavoured to avoid extremes. Nothing have I set down in malice, nor have I flattered even the dead.

This is not a "Life of Scott"—absolve me, kind reader, from any such arrogation. "No man can write the life of another who has not lived in social intercourse with him." I have therefore stood aside as much as may be, and

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allowed Scott himself, and those who lived in social intercourse with him—Lockhart and Skene, Constable and the Ballantynes, Laidlaw, the Ettrick Minstrel, and others, to portray the character and career of him who for a generation was the enchanter of Europe.

KIRN, N.B.,

*June 10th, 1899.*



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# SIR WALTER SCOTT.

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## THE CHILD.

“EVERY Scottishman,” says Sir Walter, “has a pedigree. It is a national prerogative as unalienable as his pride and his poverty.” Spite of this playful irony, Sir Walter was not indifferent to pedigree. He traced his own through many generations and emblazoned his armorial bearings on the ceiling of his beautiful hall at Abbotsford. It was pride of pedigree, to retrieve the fortunes of his ancestors, to found a house, and to be enrolled among the aristocracy of his country, that was his ruin.

Sir Walter was the lineal descendant of “Auld Watt of Harden,” whose spouse was the flower of Yarrow, immortalised in the “Lay of the Last Minstrel.” Auld Watt was a feudal chief and robber of considerable renown. “Upon one occasion,” says Sir Walter, “when the village

herd was driving out the cattle to pasture, the old laird heard him call loudly to drive out Harden's cow. 'Harden's cow!' echoed the affronted chief. 'Is it come to that pass? By my faith, they shall soon say Harden's kye (cows).'"

Instantly he sounded his bugle, set out with his retainers, and next day returned with a herd of cattle and a brindled bull. On his return with this gallant prey he passed a very large haystack. It occurred to the old chieftain that this would be exceedingly convenient to fodder his new stock of cattle; but as no means of transporting it was obvious, he was fain to take leave of it with this apostrophe: "By my saul, if ye had four feet ye would not stand lang there."

Auld Watt was a fair specimen of the chieftain-robbers of olden times, to whom nothing came amiss that was not too heavy or too hot.

Auld Watt's son, Sir William Scott, was a brave and handsome man, with a decided taste, like his father, for cattle stealing. This famous marauder, in a plundering raid on the lands of Elibank, was captured by Sir Gideon Murray's retainers. When taken to the castle dungeon he was offered, through the kind consideration of Lady Murray, the alternative of being hanged on Sir Gideon's private gallows, or married in his private chapel to his ugly daughter, "muckle-mouthed Meg." After



considerable hesitation, Sir William preferred the marriage altar to the gallows-tree. The contract of marriage was instantly executed on the parchment of a drum, which is still in the charter chest of his noble descendant. Sir Walter was the inheritor of this "muckle mouth," as his portraits testify.

The large-mouthed lady developed into an excellent wife, with a fine genius for pickling the beef which her gallant husband stole from the herds of his foes.

One evening at dinner, said Boswell to Johnson, "Sir, were not some of your ancestors hanged?" "No, sir," replied Johnson, sternly, "but I have had some that deserved hanging." If none of Sir Walter's ancestors were hanged, some of them, at least, deserved hanging.

Midway between Auld Watt, of Harden, and Sir Walter, lived our hero's great grandfather, known by the surname of "Beardie," because, after the exile of the Stuart dynasty, he vowed that no razor or scissors should ever touch his beard. He reminds us of the Highland Chieftain, who, having shaken hands with Prince Charlie, raised his hand proudly and said: "While I live, that hand will never touch water." It had been well for Beardie and his descendant if his enthusiasm for the Stuart dynasty had been laid

aside with his razor and scissors, but he took up arms and intrigued in the Stuart cause, until, at last, he lost everything he had in the world, except his beard.

Beardie's son was the grandfather of Sir Walter, exquisitely described in *Marmion* :—

The thatched mansion's grey hair'd sire  
Wise without learning, plain and good,  
And sprung of Scotland's gentler blood.

Robert, like his ancestors, had many a strange escapade. In the preface to "*Guy Mannering*" Sir Walter relates the following anecdote :—"My grandfather, while riding over Charter House Moor, fell suddenly among a large band of gypsies. They instantly seized on his bridle with shouts of welcome, exclaiming that they had often dined at his expense, and he must now stay and share their cheer. Being naturally a bold, lively-spirited man, he entered into the humour of the thing, and sat down to the feast, which consisted of all the varieties of game, poultry, pigs, and so forth, that could be collected by a wide and indiscriminate system of plunder. The dinner was a very merry one, but my relative got a hint from some of the older gypsies, just when the mirth and fun grew fast and furious, and mounting his horse accordingly, he took a French leave of his entertainers."

Robert's eldest son, Walter, the father of our hero, in religion, was a Calvinist; in politics, a Whig; and by profession, a lawyer. He had an extensive business as a Writer to the Signet. His zeal for his clients was almost ludicrous. He thought for them, felt for their honour as if it was his own, and insisted upon them performing what he conceived to be their duty.

"If," says Sir Walter, "there was an old mother or aunt to be maintained, he was too apt to administer to their necessities from what the young heir had destined exclusively to his pleasures." He was in person handsome, in manners formal, in habits temperate, and in kindness boundless. He had a passion for attending funerals.

How different with his famous son!

"I hate funerals," says Sir Walter in his journal, "always did. There is such a mixture of mummery with real grief—the actual mourner perhaps heart-broken, and all the rest making solemn faces, and whispering observations on the weather and public news, and here and there a greedy fellow enjoying the cake and wine. To me it is a farce full of most tragical mirth, and I am not sorry, but glad, that I shall not see my own. This is a most unfilial tendency of mine, for my father absolutely loved a funeral; and as he was

a man of fine presence, and looked the mourner well, he was asked to every interment of distinction. He seemed to preserve a list of a whole bead-roll of cousins merely for the pleasure of being at their funerals, which he was often asked to superintend, and, I suspect, had sometimes to pay for. He carried me with him as often as he could to these mortuary ceremonies; but feeling I was not, like him, either useful or ornamental, I escaped as often as I could."

His wife was a lady of gentle birth, of literary taste, whose supreme delight was in old ballads and romantic literature. It goes without saying that no able man ever had a fool for a mother. Walter's mother was a woman of decided talent.

Such, then, were the ancestors of the pleasant song-singer and charming tale-teller to Britain and to Europe, who first saw the light of day in the old town of Edinburgh, on August 15, 1771.

Walter was a strong, healthy child until eighteen months old, when a lameness suddenly developed itself in his right leg, which accompanied him through life.

The late John Murray, the famous publisher, told me that he remembered seeing Sir Walter and Lord Byron in his father's drawing-room, and what especially impressed itself on his childish

memory was seeing the two great poets, both lame, hobbling down the stair together.

Walter, when three years old, was sent to recruit his health in the rustic home of his grandfather on the banks of the Tweed. It was here that he had his first, and almost a miracle that it was not his last, experience of conscious life. A young nurse had been sent from Edinburgh to take charge of Walter, and had left her heart behind her in the keeping of some wild young fellow. She soon grew tired of the country and her charge, and begged to return to her lover, which Walter's mother would not allow. The nurse, having made a confidant of the old housekeeper, informed her that on one occasion she had taken Walter to the Craggs and there was tempted of the devil to cut the child's throat and bury him in the moss. The housekeeper, to save the nurse from any farther temptation on Walter's account, instantly dismissed her and took the child under her own charge.

It was well for the world, if not for the nurse, that instead of cutting Walter's throat, she latterly became a lunatic and cut her own.

This faithful old housekeeper, who probably saved young Walter's life, says he was a sweet-tempered bairn, a darling with all about the house.

The child's great delight was in the society of

the aged hind, Auld Sandy Ormiston, the chief shepherd of the flock, who used to carry young Walter astride on his shoulders to the hills, to roll on the grass, pull flowers, watch the lambs, and listen to the ewe milkers' songs. When the child grew tired, Auld Sandy blew a particular note on his whistle, which signified to the domestics in the house below that the little fellow wished to be taken home again. By-and-by he was promoted from the shepherd's shoulder to a Shetland pony, not so large as many a Newfoundland dog. This little creature used to come into the house and be fed from the child's hand. It is touching to note that Sir Walter in his old age, when he had a grandson afflicted with an infirmity akin to his own, purchased for him a pony of the same race and gave it the name of Marion, in memoriam of his early favourite.

Everything was done at Sandy-Knowe that ingenuity could suggest to remove the boy's lameness, and some of the cures they tried were ludicrous enough. An old woman suggested to Walter's grandfather to kill and flay a sheep, and to wrap the child during the night in the warm skin. This was done, and when the morning came, Walter, to his great relief, was delivered from the sheep's skin, but not from the lameness. His parents, too, made other efforts to cure his infirm-

ity. Edinburgh at this time, it is said, boasted of an ingenious mechanist in leather—the first person who extended the use of that commodity beyond ordinary purposes. His name was Gavin Wilson, and, being something of a humorist, he exhibited a signboard intended to burlesque the vanity of his brother tradesmen—his profession being thus indicated: “Leather Leg Maker, *Not* to His Majesty.” Honest Gavin, on the application of his parent, did all he could for Walter, but failed as signally as the old woman and the Edinburgh physicians to remove the boy’s infirmity.

But although the child was lame of limb he was strong of lung. His Aunt Jenny, who stood in the same relation to him as Betty Davidson did to Burns, had taught him, not by the eye but through the ear, the ballad of “Hardy Knute.”

On one occasion, when the minister of the parish was visiting at Sandy-Knowe, young Walter shouted the ballad with such pertinacity and stentorian voice that at last the worthy minister, feeling annoyed at his conversation being interrupted, remarked with a little acidity of temper, “One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is.” It is to this episode that we probably owe Sir Walter’s life-long admiration of this poem, which in after years he recited with such effect to Lord Byron. It is to this

episode also Sir Walter refers in the following lines:—

The venerable priest,  
Our frequent and familiar guest,  
Whose life and manners well could paint  
Alike the Student and the Saint;  
Alas! whose speech too oft I broke  
With gambol rude and timeless joke;  
For I was wayward, bold, and wild,  
A self-willed imp, a grandma's child.  
But, half a plague and half a jest,  
Was still endured, beloved, caressed.

This boisterous self-assertion and gabble of words, which Mrs. Cockburn and others foolishly mistook for genius, should have been kept in check by what Carlyle calls “a judicious application of birch” to the muscular integument of this “self-willed imp.”

In after life, however, Sir Walter made ample amends for this rudeness and obstreperousness of childhood.

Many years afterwards, Sir Walter paid a visit to his old friend, the minister of his grandfather's parish, whom he found sitting robed in an old tartan dressing-gown.

What a change! There he sat—alas! no longer young, but old and deaf and feeble in second childhood, engaged on his first and last literary venture, a manuscript entitled “The Revolution,” which he insisted on reading to the annoyance of



Sir Walter, with a voice naturally strong, and which the feelings of an author then raised above the depression of age and declining health.

“I begged him,” says Sir Walter, “to spare this fatigue, which could not but injure his health.” His reply was remarkable: “I know,” he said, “that I cannot survive a fortnight; and what signifies an exertion that can at worst only accelerate my death by a few days.” He died within less than the period he assigned.

What a ludicrous revenge the whirligig of time had brought about. There sat Sir Walter, who in the days of his youth had so tried the patience of the parish minister by shouting in his ear with stentorian voice the ballad of “Hardy Knute.” And now this minister in second childhood severely tries the patience of Sir Walter by shouting in his ear, with a voice of thunder, his history of the Revolution.

Walter was only four years of age when his grandfather died. Through life he distinctly remembered the writing and sealing of the funeral letters, and watching the long-winding funeral procession on its way from Sandy-Knowe to the old kirk yard.

Shortly after his grandfather’s death, Walter was sent with his Aunt Jenny to Bath, to try what the mineral waters could do for him. They took

shipping from Leith to London in a smack called the *Duchess of Buccleuch*. A lady boasted long after, jokingly to Joanna Baillie, that she had “been once Walter Scott’s bed-fellow, the irregularity having taken place,” she added waggishly, “in the Leith smack, her Æneas being only four years of age.” In London he saw the usual sights, which made a vivid impression on the mind of the wondering boy. Time will not permit us to follow his career in Bath, where he remained a year. Enough to say that the pump-room and the baths did as little to remove his lameness as did the warm skin of the new-killed sheep, the leather leg of Gavin Wilson, or the prescriptions of the Edinburgh doctors.

The lameness of the brave little fellow had its advantages. It kept him from the games of childhood, and caused him to learn to think and to find supreme delight in ballads, history-books, and old world lore. Even at this early age, Walter, according to Mrs. Cockburn, authoress of the modern version of “*The Flowers of the Forest*,” seems to have been a remarkable boy. She thus describes him:—“I last night supped in Mr. Walter Scott’s. He has the most extraordinary genius of a boy I ever saw. He was reading a poem to his mother when I went in. I made him read on. It was the description of a shipwreck.

His passion rose with the storm. He lifted up his eyes and hands. 'There's the mast gone,' says he; 'crash it goes—they will all perish.' After this agitation he turns to me, 'This is too melancholy,' says he; 'I must read you something more amusing.' When taken to bed last night he told his aunt he liked that lady. 'What lady?' says she. 'Why! Mrs. Cockburn, for I think she is a virtuoso—like myself.' "

Sir Walter himself relates how in these youthful days he found in his mother's dressing-room, where he used for a time to sleep, some odd volumes of Shakespeare, and with what rapture he sat up to read them in his night shirt, by the light of the fire in her apartment, until the bustle of the family rising from the supper-table warned him it was time to creep back to his bed, where he was supposed to have been safely deposited from nine o'clock. In Sir Walter's case it is emphatically true, "The Child is Father of the Man."

## THE SCHOLAR.

IN 1778, Walter was placed in the High School of Edinburgh, where he was an “incorrigibly idle imp,” distinguished for nothing but tricks and story-telling. There is a characteristic story of his school days, which Sir Walter told in his last illness, the light playing over his faded features as the circumstances came back to him accompanied by a thousand boyish feelings that had slept for well-nigh half a century.

“There was a boy,” says Sir Walter, “in my class, who stood always at the top, nor could I with all my efforts supplant him. Day after day, and still he kept his place, do what I could; till at length I observed, that when a question was asked him, he always fumbled with his fingers at a particular button in the lower part of his waist-coat. To remove it, therefore, became expedient in my eyes, and in an evil moment it was removed with a knife. Great was my anxiety to know the success of my measure, and it succeeded too well. When the boy was again questioned, his fingers sought for the button, but it was not to be found.

In his distress he looked down for it—it was to be seen no more than to be felt. He stood confounded, and I took possession of his place; nor did he ever regain it, or ever, I believe, suspect who was the author of his wrong. Often, in after life, has the sight of him smote me, as I passed by him, and often have I resolved to make him some reparation, but it ended only in good resolutions. Though I never renewed my acquaintance with him, I often saw him, for he filled some inferior office in one of the courts of law in Edinburgh. Poor fellow! I believe he is dead; he took early to drinking.”

Thus it is ever—the world’s greatest scholars are seldom or never the world’s greatest men.

Young Walter was greater in the play-ground than in the class. He possessed qualities which boys greatly reverence—he was brave, and an excellent story-teller. In winter, during play hours, he could use his tongue cleverly at Luckie Brown’s fireside, where an admiring audience assembled to listen to his inimitable tales. He could also on occasion, in the play-ground, use his fists as nimbly as his tongue—as many a poor boy’s head could testify.

Dr. Adam, the Rector, a vain and absent-minded man, who had not a little of his namesake, Parson Adam in “Fielding,” about him, took delight in

his profession, and a special interest in his school. His noisy mansion, which to others would have been a pandemonium, was to him a paradise. With pride he could rehearse the career of every one of his old scholars who had been under his rectorship. He always traced their success or misfortune in after life to their attention or negligence while under his care. He took a deep interest in Walter, who, although not a scholar after academic rule, was yet recognised by him as a boy of brilliant talents, whom he called "the historian of the class." Afterwards, when Scott became the great novelist, the worthy Doctor took not a little credit to himself for his greatness. At last, paralysis struck the old Rector down whilst teaching his class. As he lay a-dying in delirium he fancied that he was in school, administering praise and rebuke. His last words were, "It is getting dark; boys, you may go," and instantly expired.

Walter's father, however, did not trust his education solely to his high school lessons. He had a tutor at home—one Mitchell by name. "This young man," says Sir Walter, "was bred to the kirk, but unfortunately took such a very strong turn to fanaticism that he afterwards resigned an excellent living in a seaport town, merely because he could not persuade the mariners

of the guilt of setting sail of a Sunday—in which, by the way, he was less likely to be successful, as, *ceteris paribus*, sailors, from an opinion that it is a fortunate omen, always choose to weigh anchor on that day. He goes on to say, “I, with a head on fire for chivalry, was a Cavalier, my friend was a Roundhead; I was a Tory, and he was a Whig; I hated Presbyterians, and admired Montrose with his victorious Highlanders; he liked the Presbyterian Ulysses, the dark and politic Argyle; so that we never wanted subjects of dispute, but our disputes were always amicable. In all these tenets there was no real conviction on my part. I took up my politics at that period as King Charles II. did his religion—from an idea that the Cavalier creed was the more gentlemanlike persuasion of the two.” The tutor also tried to persuade Walter that novel reading was sinful. Walter could believe much, but not that. Little did the worthy tutor know that his pupil was destined to become the greatest novel-writer of all ages.

During Walter's high school career, his mother was anxious that he and his brother should be taught music. A music master was engaged to give private lessons. The attempt was hopeless. It drove the worthy but irritable music master to despair. Walter had no eye for painting and no ear for music. He could never sing—only grunt.

Although the music master failed to get music into them, he succeeded by the application of the birch to get music out of them in the form of howling, to the great annoyance of Lady Cumming, who lived next door. At last her ladyship sent to beg that the boys might not all be flogged at precisely the same time, as, though she had no doubt that the punishment was deserved, the music of the concord was really dreadful. It appears strange, yet is not uncommon, for writers of musical verses to want this natural gift. Johnson is a splendid instance. He neither knew music nor cared for it. One evening a lady who was maintaining the dignity of her own musical performances with all the firmness of stupidity accustomed to be flattered, asked Johnson if he liked music. He replied, "Yes, madam ; as much as I do any other disagreeable sound." Scott, however, enjoyed music, although incapable of producing two notes consecutively that were either in tune or in time. At dinner parties, on rare occasions, when pressed to contribute his quota to the music of the evening, he would break forth with the song of "Tarry Woo," in a strain of unmusical vehemence which never failed, on the same principle as Dick Tinto's ill-painted sign, to put the company into good humour.

About the time Walter should have proceeded



to college his health broke down, and he was sent to his uncle, who resided at Kelso in a beautiful villa on the banks of the Tweed. To keep his classics from rusting he attended the Kelso Grammar School, under the mastership of a Mr. Whale. This gentleman was very touchy as to his name. Any reference to Jonah or remark about being "an odd fish" drove him mad. So absurdly sensitive was he that he made his son, young Whale, sign his name "Wale," whom the boys immediately nicknamed "Prince of Wales." The person of Whale senior was as awkward as his name—something of the Dominie Sampson type. He was quite a giant—between six and seven feet in height. In spite of his stupid sensitiveness he was an excellent classical teacher, and managed to whack into Scott a good deal of Latin. Here Walter was regarded by his schoolfellows as a phenomenon of black-letter scholarship, which by-and-by achieved for him the cognomen of "Duns Scotus." Here, too, he gave evidence of his powers of creation as well as acquisition. Here, too, he became noted for his own stories. "Slink over beside me, Jimmy," he would whisper to his schoolfellow Ballantyne, "and I'll tell you a story." Jimmy was indeed destined to sit beside him and play a tragic part with him during the greater part of his life.

How strangely are the threads of a great man's life interwoven! If he had not gone to Kelso he might never have been acquainted, at least connected, with the Ballantynes. Little did either of them know how their names would go over the world, and how that long and mysterious connection would terminate. "In the intervals of school hours," says James Ballantyne, "it was our constant practice to walk by the banks of the Tweed, and his stories became quite inexhaustible." Even on that same spot where they walked and talked, Scott was to raise Abbotsford—"that romance in stone and lime"—his pride and his ruin.

In the November of that year Walter was recalled from Kelso to Edinburgh to attend the University. It is on record that when Byron realised that he had ceased to be a boy, it gave him "a pang of the most exquisite anguish." Whether Scott, when he ceased to be a boy, had feelings akin to those of Byron—who can tell? Probably Walter preferred his boyish rambles with young Ballantyne on the banks of the Tweed to a University career, and relinquished the one for the other with a deep sigh. However, be that as it may, in the University, as in the high school, Walter made no figure as a scholar, either in classics or metaphysics. In Latin he made little progress, but in the

riot of the class-room lost what he had learned from Luke, Fraser, Adam, and Whale. Greek he despised and absolutely declined to study; in the class he was known by the appellation of "The Greek blockhead." Scott himself confessed that he knew *little* Greek; so, too, did Johnson. Yet how shall we know what Johnson would have called *much* Greek? We can have no such difficulty in interpreting the exact meaning of Scott's confession, as in after years he added that he had "almost forgotten the Greek alphabet." The Professor of Greek, after the manner of a "Jebb," passed in the class-room a severe sentence on Scott—"that dunce he was, and dunce was to remain," a sentence which the Professor in after years revoked over a bottle of Burgundy with Walter in the Literary Club, of which they were both distinguished members.

Sir Walter's reflections on his school and college career are very touching. "If my learning," he says, "be flimsy and inaccurate, the reader must have some compassion even for an idle workman who had so narrow a foundation to build upon. If, however, it should ever fall to the lot of youth to peruse these pages, may such a reader remember that it is with the deepest regret that I recollect in my manhood the opportunities of learning which I neglected in my youth—that through

every part of my literary career I have felt pinched and hampered by my own ignorance, and that I would at this moment give half the reputation I have had the good fortune to acquire, if by doing so I could rest the remaining part upon a sound foundation of learning and science.”

It now became imperative on Walter to choose a profession, and he resolved to follow that of law, but whether as an Advocate or Writer of the Signet he had not quite decided.

Meanwhile, judiciously considering that the technical knowledge of a W.S. would be advantageous to an Advocate, he resolved to enter his father's chambers as an apprentice. “I cannot reproach myself,” he says, “with being entirely an idle apprentice, far less, as the reader might reasonably have expected—

‘A clerk foredoomed my father's soul to cross.’”

He hated the drudgery of the office and utterly detested the confinement, yet felt a pride and pleasure in being helpful to his father.

He had now leisure to select his own books, and to peruse them in his own way, which was often, we are told, in the hop-step-and-jump fashion, beginning at the middle or the end, though he managed to master them as well as those who read

them in the usual way. His supreme delight was in works of fiction. Students, in their youth, have generally a chosen friend—a boon companion with whom they read the same books, study the same subjects, and witness the same great plays. Such an associate had Scotland's two greatest literary sons. Walter Scott had for companion John Irving; Thomas Carlyle had for companion Edward Irving—both bore the name of Irving.

During the second year in his father's office he burst a blood-vessel. Absolute rest was enjoined upon him. He was forbidden to talk—a severe trial to him. As he lay in silence and solitude he devoted himself to the study of the French and Italian languages. Other moments of these weary weeks were spent in learning chess, and looking out of his window by a combination of mirrors so arranged that when lying in bed he could see the troops march out for exercise, and other incidents that occurred. The science of chess he abandoned in after life, saying that it was a shame to throw away on mastering a mere game of skill, however ingenious, the time which would suffice for the acquisition of a new language. "Surely," he said, "chess-playing is a sad waste of brains." After a while he regained complete health, and with this illness bade farewell to disease and medicine.

It is the tradition of the family that Walter wished at this period of his life to become a soldier. His infirmity of lameness, however, that had beset him in youth, rendered this impossible. A most fortunate lameness for the world; otherwise, it had never been in possession of "Marmion," "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," and the "Waverly Novels."

In the winter of 1788 he was sent to the University to attend the Civil Law Class, which forms part of the curriculum of Writers to the Signet as well as of Advocates. He applied himself to the study of law with commendable diligence. In this class he made the acquaintance of William Clerk, of Eldin, through whom he was introduced to George Cranstoun (afterwards Lord Corehouse), Lord Abercromby, Sir Patrick Murray, of Ochtertyre, and a host of others of good family and brilliant talents, who rose to eminence in their respective callings.

Clerk, from the first, had an intuitive prophetic sense of Walter's future greatness, and frequently endeavoured to correct his eccentricities in dress and behaviour. One day, walking with Walter, Clerk rallied him regarding the slovenliness of his dress, his corduroy breeches being much glazed by the rubbing of his staff, which he immediately flourished and said: "They be good enough for

drinking in—let us go and have some oysters in Covenant Close.”

Clerk, like his ancestors, had antiquarian tastes, and with Walter had many a ramble to places of antiquity. Antiquarians, however, are sometimes deceived by modern imitations. Clerk used to relate how his father, Lord Eldin, when a lad, carved antique heads and carefully buried them. These his father, the Laird, dug up and conveyed with due reverence to his museum, and presented some of them to certain museums with great ceremony as being of priceless value : where it is just possible they still hold an honoured place. Clerk used also to relate how his ancestor, Sir John Clerk, in showing some English antiquarians a supposed Roman camp, and on his exclaiming at a particular spot, “This I take to have been the Pretorium,” a herdsman who stood by answered, “Pretorium here or Pretorium there, I made it with a flaughter spade.”

About this time, Walter was introduced through Sir Adam Ferguson to the highest literary society in Edinburgh ; through him he became acquainted with Blacklock, the blind poet, whom Johnson, a few years before, beheld with reverence. In Sir Adam’s house, on one occasion, young Scott met Robert Burns, Dougald Stewart, and others who

stood high in the literary world. Walter was too young and too modest to take part in the conversation, but unexpectedly he had an innings. I shall give the incident in Sir Walter's own language:—

“The only thing I remember in Burns' manner was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on the one side, on the other his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:—

Cold on Canadian hills or Minden's plain,  
Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain,  
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew;  
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew  
Gave the sad presage of his future years—  
The child of misery baptized in tears.

Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather the idea suggested to his mind; he actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called ‘The Justice of the Peace.’ I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word which I then received, and still recollect, with very great pleasure.”



Thus met Scotland's two great literary stars, the one about to rise, the other beginning to set. In the same manner Ovid met with Virgil, Milton with Galileo, and Carlyle with Goethe.

The description which Sir Walter gives of Burns as he appeared to him at the meeting is inimitable. "His person," says Scott, "was strong and robust, his manners rustic, not clownish, a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity which received part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents; his features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture; but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school, who keeps labourers for the drudgery, but the douce good man holds the plough himself. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye, alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large and of a dark cast, and glowed—I say literally glowed—when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men in my time. His conversation

expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the many men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness, and when he differed in opinion he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted, nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh, but, considering what literary emoluments have been since his day, the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling." The words which Burns on that memorable night addressed to Walter, and which through life he remembered with such pride and pleasure, were, "You will be a man yet."

## THE ADVOCATE.

IN 1790 it became necessary for Walter to decide to which department of law he should attach himself. He decided for the Bar. In due course the important day arrived when Walter and his friend Clerk assumed the gown and were called to the Bar. After the ceremony was accomplished, and they had for some time mingled with the crowd of Advocates in the Outer Court, Walter said to his comrade, mimicking the air and tone of a Highland lass waiting at the Cross of Edinburgh to be hired for harvest work, "We've stood here an hour by the Tron, hinny, and deil a ane has speered our price." Some friendly solicitor, however, gave him a guinea fee before the Court rose. This guinea he applied to the purchase of a new night-cap. This probably was the identical cap which Lord Jeffrey called "the portentous machine." It is touching to note that the first fee of any consequence was expended on a silver taper-stand for his mother, which the old lady used to point to with great satisfaction, as it stood on her chimney-piece five-and-twenty years afterwards.

Scott—he can no longer be called Walter—had now grown up to be a jovial young man and—Advocate. In vacation time he enjoyed many a Tam o' Shanter ride through wind and storm on his stout Galloway over Flodden and other fields where his future work was to lie, although he then did not know it. “He was makin' himsel' a' the time,” said the Sheriff-substitute of Roxburghshire who accompanied him, “but he didna ken maybe what he was about till years had passed; at first he thought o' little, I dare say, but the queerness and the fun.” In these peregrinations he was ever a welcome guest, whether at the table of the decorous manse, or at the rough but kindly board of the rustic peasant. Here lay the study of the future novelist. These were the scenes where he studied the models of Scottish character, which in after years he was destined to transfer in such living colours to the canvas. On one occasion, on his return from one of these raids, as he called them, his father inquired how he had been supporting himself so long. “Pretty much like the young ravens,” answered Walter. “I only wish I had been as good a player on the flute as poor George Primrose in the ‘Vicar of Wakefield.’ If I had his art, I should like nothing better than to tramp like him from cottage to cottage over the world.”

“I doubt,” said the honest Signet Writer, “I greatly doubt, sir, you were born for nae better than a gangrel scrape-gut.” Even a revelation, could it have been made to him, of Walter’s future glory as a *littérateur* would not have satisfied him. Probably the grave Calvinistic Signet Writer would have preferred as infinitely greater glory a vision of his son wagging his head in a pulpit or seated on the Bench, with the dignity of dulness—an ephemeral Lord of Session. Scott at first had little practice at the Bar, but drank claret at “Fountain’s” and ate oysters at St. John’s Coffee-house, and every day “swept with his gown that Parliament House, which seems the ‘Hall Eblis’ to many a weary and briefless peripatetic.”

However that may be, during seven successive years Scott, with Sheriff Shortreed as his guide and companion, made raids into Liddesdale in search of ancient ballads, which formed the materials for his “Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.” Concerning the object of these raids, the Sheriff says: “He didna ken maybe what he was about till years had passed. At first he thought o’ little, I dare say, but the queerness and the fun.” I am not quite sure of that. I suspect that he knew perfectly what he was about, and had a shrewd idea what the result would one day be. Of these ancient ballads, by which

Scott's attention was first drawn to poetry, he remarked in 1798, that, "considered in regard to their connection with true history and real personages, these fragments ought never to be despised. They are like the rapid but powerful drawings of an old Master, which a modern hand, if sufficiently experienced, may yet transfer to the canvas, and finish into complete historical pictures." How exquisitely he realised this idea, all know who have read the Scottish "Border Minstrelsy." In that work, he admirably utilised the ancient ballads as a starting-point for historical research. It is evident, from Sir Walter's allusion to finished sketches and historical pictures, that, as early as 1798, he had the inner consciousness that, as an original artist, he would one day give forth to the world finished immortal pictures of these rough sketches.

The Sheriff, in his interesting narrative of these raids, has erroneously given us the impression that Scott, during his rambles, devoted himself to Bacchus. At the dinner-table of Willie Elliot, who stood as the great original of Dandie Dinmont, the Sheriff says that Scott and he would rise "half glowerin' fou." And again he says that, although "Scott was often fou, he was aye guid tempered." With all due deference to the worthy Sheriff, I question his statements and would

prefer proof to mere assertion. Through the whole course of Scott's career, he was a thoroughly sober and temperate man, utterly detesting anything like drunkenness. "Depend upon it," he used to say, "of all vices, drinking is the most incompatible with greatness." In this respect, Scott was a perfect contrast to the whole bead-roll of immortals, who often got mortally drunk. It is on record that Addison once drank till he vomited in the company of Voltaire, which called forth the stinging remark that the only good thing that came out of his mouth in his (Voltaire's) presence was the wine that had gone into it. The younger Pitt and his friend and colleague, Harry Dundas (afterwards Lord Melville), were accustomed to go the pace over the mahogany, and once went reeling together from the dinner-table to the House of Commons, where Pitt declared that he could see no Speaker, and Harry that he saw two. Fox also was a thirsty soul. Richard Savage, like Robert Burns, got drunk in common pot-houses, Dick Steele in taverns where he measured time by the bottle, writing to his wife who had sent for him, "I'll be home in half-a-bottle." Byron, too, drank oceans of brandy-and-water. Not so with Scott, he was too shrewd and pawky a Scot for that. The worthy Sheriff, in his insinuations against Scott, was not so loyal to his friend as the old Scotch

beadle to his minister, accused before the Presbytery of drunkenness. "Sir," said the Moderator to the beadle, "did you ever see the minister drunk?" "No, sir, never," replied the beadle, "for lang ere that I was aye blind fou mysel'." The Sheriff admits that he was often "fou himsel'," therefore no fit judge of the sobriety of his friend, and as he has given us no collateral evidence, I dismiss the accusation as a scandalous myth.

Scott returned annually from these peregrinations in time for the opening of the Court of Session, to join the ranks of the gentlemen not over-anxious for business. Every day he might be seen in the company of the "briefless" at the "Mountain," in the Outer Court, where there was more news than law. Scott held a high place there, being more noted for his stories in the Outer House than for his arguments in the Inner. Many of the young loungers at the "Mountain" rose in after years to the highest honours in their profession.

Scott for the first few years had little professional work, but he read, now Stair's decisions, and now the last new novel; plunged into a wide sea of literature as well as law. What he read and wished to remember he never forgot. He had a retentive memory, which in general is not



characteristic of men of genius, but rather of those whose minds are composed of sticking plaster. Scott was an exception. He had the divine gift of memory and the divine art of forgetfulness. He used to illustrate this peculiarity of his memory by old Beatie of Meikledale's answer to his parish minister, who complimented him on the strength of his memory. "No, sir," said the old Borderer. "I have no command of my memory. It only retains what hits my fancy ; and probably, sir, if you were to preach to me for two hours I would not be able, when you finished, to remember a word you had been saying." Exactly such a memory had Scott. He had the art of forgetfulness when he chose—blessed gift when allied to genius. This was of incalculable advantage to him both in law and literature.

As a young advocate on circuit, Scott had an odd case given to him now and again ; but these were more comical than lucrative. His first appearance as counsel was in a criminal trial at the Assizes in Jedburgh. He was successful in helping a notorious poacher and sheep-stealer to escape unpunished. "You're a lucky scoundrel," whispered Scott to his client, when the verdict was pronounced. "I'm just o' your mind," quoth the desperado, "and I'll send you a maukin (a hare) in the morn, man." At the next Assizes in the

same town, Scott was not so successful. This time the evidence was so clear against his client that no skill or legal quibbling could prevent the sentence of guilty. After sentence the criminal desired to see the young advocate in the condemned cell. Scott complied. "I am very sorry, sir," said the prisoner, "but I have no fee to offer you, so let me beg your acceptance of two bits of advice that may be useful, perhaps, when you come to have a house of your own. I am done with practice, you see, and here is my legacy—never keep a large watch-dog out of doors. We can always silence them cheaply; but tie a little tight, yelping terrier within. Secondly, put no trust in nice, clever, gimcrack locks. The only thing that bothers us is a huge old heavy one, no matter how simple the construction, and the ruder and rustier the key so much the better for the housekeeper." Thirty years afterwards, when Scott had become the illustrious Sir Walter, he told this story with great glee at a judge's dinner in Jedburgh, and summed it up with a rhyme:—

Yelping terrier, rusty key,  
Was Walter Scott's best Jeddart fee.

At another Assize he was counsel in an appeal case concerning a cow which his client had sold as sound, but which the Sheriff in his Court had

pronounced to have “cliers”—a disease akin to glanders in a horse. Scott, in opening his case before Lord Eskgrove, the presiding judge, stoutly maintained the healthiness of the cow, which he said had only a cough. “Stop there,” quoth the judge. “I have had plenty of healthy kye in my time, but I have never heard of any of them coughing. A coughing cow!—that will never do. Sustain the Sheriff’s judgment and decern.”

The most important case in the professional career of Scott was in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. He was counsel for a clergyman accused of drunkenness and immorality. His speech was an able and characteristic one, but not adapted for the gravity of the venerable court. The House was crowded, and, probably forgetting the presence of so many learned divines, Scott, at a certain point of his speech, quoted in a bold and rollicking manner an indecent and irreverent sentence alleged to have been spoken by his client. The Assembly thought that the young advocate was presuming to take liberties. Instantly the leader of the House rose, sternly called Scott to order, and administered a severe rebuke. The House cheered. That cheer was the death-knell in the professional career of Scott. He never got over it. He resumed his address in a feeble and tremulous voice. A crowd

of young advocates in the gallery who had come to hear their friend, thinking that the Assembly had treated him with unreasonable severity, gave him a cheer, to the astonishment of the House. They were at once turned out. This episode made confusion worse confounded. The result was that Scott not only lost his case in the Assembly, but his good name as an accomplished speaker of taste and judgment. What Scott's fee was report saith not. It is to be hoped that it was larger than the fee given to Ardmillan, afterwards Lord Ardmillan, in similar circumstances. A cleric who was deposed for drunkenness once feed Ardmillan by handing to him, at the bar of the General Assembly, a roll of something that looked in bulk like a fee of between fifteen and twenty sovereigns, but which on being examined, after his eminent counsel had got home, and he himself got prayed over and deposed, turned out to be six round peppermint lozenges of the kind that is most effective in stifling the smell of whisky.

Scott gradually crept into a practice at the Bar, which yielded on an average some £200 per annum. The principal part of this doubtless came through his father's chambers. What a magnificent remuneration does the Scotch Bar provide for men of genius! The Scotch Bar is a bar to prevent men of genius from attaining the highest honours

of the profession. Otherwise Sir Walter Scott and Sir William Hamilton would have succeeded there. Men of genius, like Scott, or of scholarship, like Hamilton, are not capable of being understood by the common herd of litigants, W.S.'s, and fraternity of S.S.C.'s. They look upon such men as erratic madmen. Rare genius or profound scholarship was seldom to be found either at the Bar or on the Bench. So thought the greatest lawyer, judge, and Lord Chancellor of this century—Lord Westbury. With one or two rare exceptions, he had unlimited scorn for the Judges of the Court of Session. It must have been infinite merriment to watch how sarcastically he handled the Scotch appeals, to listen to his criticisms as he scanned the opinions and decisions of the Scotch judges, and hear him say, as he once did in his gentlest tones and most pleasant mincing manner, "A melancholy collection of erroneous sentences. It is hard to say whether the law or the grammar is worse." On another occasion, when interrogated by a noble and learned lord as to what he meant to say the Court of Session had decided, he ejaculated in a supremely contemptuous whisper, before proceeding to give the House of Lords a polite, polished, and plausible answer, "Stupid old fool, just fit for being a Judge in the Court of Session yourself."

In the year 1799, through the influence of his friend the Duke of Buccleuch, he was, with a salary of £300 per annum, appointed Sheriff-substitute of Selkirkshire, which at the Bar is synonymous with being gracefully shelved. It is not absolutely necessary for a Sheriff-substitute to have a profound knowledge of law. A good reference library of law books, and a judgment guided by impartiality and common-sense, is all that is required. Walter Scott certainly had that.

In 1806 he was appointed to a clerkship in the Court of Session. Lockhart tries hard to exalt his hero by representing the work at the Clerk's table as onerous and overwhelming, whereas the situation was little other than a sinecure. The Lord President, before Scott's appointment, ironically said that "he was eminently well provided with Clerks—having four—of whom one could not read, another could not write, and two could neither read nor write." To perform the Clerkship satisfactorily requires no special faculty whatever, except the faculty of not sleeping, or sleeping gracefully—that is, not snoring or otherwise making an undignified noise, to interrupt the business of the Court. Sir Walter's successor in the clerkship was a friend of my own, an excellent gentleman, but, in his latter years,

somewhat drowsy. One day, just before the Court rose, Lord Y—— looked down from the bench and inquired of the Clerk, with inimitable gravity and features expressive of deep concern: “Mr. B——, were you quite well to-day?” He replied, “Perfectly, my lord; why do you ask?” “Because,” answered his lordship, “I did not observe you taking your usual sleep.”

The crowd of English and Continental tourists that visited Parliament House to gaze, not upon the Lords of Session, but upon the author of “Waverley,” was enormous. Scott was too great a genius to succeed at the Scottish Bar. But, as the gates of his profession closed against him, the gates of glory opened before him.

## THE LOVER.

It is now time to pass from Scott's struggles in law to his struggles in love. In the year 1790 young Scott suddenly, to the astonishment of his friends, became sprightly in manner and smart in attire. He doffed the old habiliments which had been the subject of many a joke to his young aristocratic companions. They could not understand this sudden metamorphosis. Walter Scott was in love. Although Scott was not a beauty, his appearance was comely and his demeanour engaging. His expansive and elevated brow gave him a dignity above the attraction of mere features. His voice was gentle, his smile pleasant, and his conversation charming.

This year he attended his first ball in the Assembly Rooms. There he met the *élite* of fashionable Edinburgh. He could not dance, but could act as a squire of dames. Speaking of this evening to a friend some years after, Scott said, with an arch look and tone of simplicity, "It was a proud night for me when I first found that a pretty young woman could think it worth her



while to sit and talk with me, hour after hour, in a corner of the ballroom, while all the world were capering in our view."

The "pretty young woman" here referred to was the daughter of Sir John and Lady Jane Stuart Belches, of Invernay, whom he had met years before—not in a ballroom, but in a graveyard. One Sunday, when the congregation of Greyfriars were dispersing through the churchyard, rain began to fall heavily. Scott noticed a young lady without an umbrella. He offered his. It was accepted, and he escorted her home. This umbrella courtship developed into an intimate acquaintance. It soon became the habit of the pair to return Sunday after Sunday from the old parish church of Greyfriars. Afterwards they met, not only at church, but in society.

Walter's attachment did not meet with the approbation of his father. The worthy Writer to the Signet, being aware that the young lady was the daughter of a rich baronet with large estates, perceived that Walter—at that time only a clerk in chambers—was no proper match for her either in wealth or position. Accordingly, when he announced his intention of taking his summer ramble in the neighbourhood of the Baronet's estates, his upright and honourable father deemed it to be his duty to write and acquaint the

Baronet with his son's attachment to his daughter, and of the intended visit to his neighbourhood. He frankly said that he wished no such affair to proceed without the express sanction of those most interested in the happiness of persons as yet too young to calculate consequences for themselves. The Northern Baronet had not heard of young Scott's intended raid into his county and treated the affair lightly. He wrote thanking Mr. Scott for his kindness and courtesy, but added that he believed he was mistaken. The Writer to the Signet, thinking he had done his duty, interfered no more, and allowed the love affair to take its course.

As time went on, the intimacy between the young people increased. She undoubtedly gave young Scott encouragement, not much perhaps, but still kept him for long years dangling about her. During these years his life was the life of suspense.

The young lady was distinctly clever and intellectual, with a dash of romance. She was perfectly capable of weighing—and did weigh—all the pros and cons of the case. Here was Scott, comely, but lame; a genius, but eccentric; an Advocate, but briefless. And here was she, rich and aristocratic; ambitious, but not avaricious. It was not the fact of Scott being poor that pre-

vented her marrying him, but the fact that *Society knew* that he was poor. The official income of the Pulpit and the Bar is pretty well known in Society. She could not brook the idea that the world should know that she had married a penniless man, with the reputation of being a trifle erratic. She had a lingering regard for Scott, but had not the courage of her opinions to dare the world's surprise. She resolved to keep him waiting, like the immortal Micawber, for something to turn up. Meanwhile, he was to work at Law and hope in love.

Scott, I believe, never declared himself openly, but she knew it perfectly. Her attitude towards him was—don't put the question, or an emphatic "No" will be the answer—Hope. During long years Scott was a half-hoping, half-desponding lover. So enamoured was he that his gentle, romantic soul, instead of facing the stern reality—yes or no—preferred the beautiful dream of a fool's paradise.

"The period," says Sir Walter, "at which love is felt most strongly, is seldom that at which there is much chance of its being brought to a happy issue. The state of artificial society opposes many complicated obstructions to early marriage, and the chance is very great that such obstacles prove insurmountable. In fine, there are few men

who do not look back in secret to some period of their youth at which a sincere and early affection was repulsed or betrayed, or became abortive from opposing circumstances. It is those little passages of secret history which leave a tinge of romance in every bosom, scarce permitting us, even in the most busy or the most advanced period of life, to listen with total indifference to a tale of true love.”

Meanwhile the young lady receives Scott's visits, enjoys his conversations, accepts his presents, and sends him little notes. During these waiting years Scott has made no headway in his profession. Yet she has been, and continued to be, his guiding star—the inspiration of his life. It is marvellous how a life can be governed by an idea. It was her secret influence which impelled the apprentice to leave the chambers of his father and select the Bar as his profession, that he might, one day, be worthy of her. It was her taste for literature that first inspired him to become an author. The Countess of Pugstall relates that in April, 1796, Scott went to pay a visit at a country house where he expected to meet the “lady of his love.” Jane Ann Cranstoun was in the secret of his attachment, and knew that however doubtful might be the young lady's feelings on that subject, she had a high admiration of Scott's abilities, and often corresponded with him on literary matters. It occurred

to her that she might perhaps forward his views in this quarter by presenting him in the character of an author. A few copies of the ballads were forthwith thrown off in the most elegant style, and one richly bound and blazoned followed Scott in the course of a few days to the country. The verses were read and approved of, and Miss Cranstoun at least flattered herself that he had not made his first appearance in types to no purpose.

Time passes, and Scott and his lady-love are not so young as they once were. This haughty and imperious dame at last begins to realise that, if she is to have a husband at all, it must be soon or never. She now gives Scott more encouragement. He begins to press his suit, and writes to a friend in high hope that his life dream will be accomplished. At this crisis a rival suitor comes suddenly forward to ask her heart and hand. She accepts him. This unknown lover hails from Perthshire—by name, Forbes; by occupation, a banker, so-called. Did she understand that a "*banker*" was one who really owned a bank and ran it at his own risk? Was she aware that there were not above two or three bankers of that class in all England and not one in Scotland—only managers of banks and agents? Never mind, the name sounds well amongst her friends. He may be poor; what of that?—her wealth will enrich him.

He may be unknown—so much the better; exactly what she wants; Scott was too well known in the society in which she moved; her influence and aristocratic connection will by-and-by ennoble him. His insignificance was the secret of his success. Could this ambitious lady have foreseen that one day the despised advocate was destined to become Sir Walter Scott of Abbotsford, the friend of nobles and companion of his king, it might have been otherwise. But who can read the future? In due course she was led to the marriage altar and married to her “*banker!*” It is almost to be hoped that she lived to repent her choice, as she had wounded for ever the heart of Walter Scott. He tells us it broke his heart. So also with Byron; his early love disappointment affected him through life.

As soon as the news reached him he hurried away to the Highlands to bury himself and his grief in the wilds of Scotland, where probably he wrote the following beautiful lines to a violet:—

The violet in her green-wood bower,  
Where birchen boughs with hazels mingle,  
May boast itself the fairest flower  
In glen, or copse, or forest dingle.

Though fair her gems of azure hue,  
Beneath the dewdrop's weight reclining;  
I've seen an eye of lovelier blue,  
More sweet through watery lustre shining.

The summer sun that dew shall dry,  
Ere yet the day be past its morrow ;  
Nor longer in my false love's eye  
Remained the tear of parting sorrow.

These lines breathe a feeling of resentment to the fair and false one, which I believe, from her conduct, to have been justified.

However, "Time" the great healer brings relief. Scott's grief is now digested. He returns from his Highland ramble to pursue Law and Literature with redoubled energy. In the early summer of 1797 he visited the English lakes. One day, in the Lake district, a romantic incident occurred, which was destined to affect the whole of his future life. As usual he is taking his morning ride, when a young lady, also on horseback, dashed past with the speed of lightning. That evening, at a party, he met the unknown beauty of the morning ride, was introduced, found her charming, led her from the ball-room to the supper table, and discovered that at last he had found his affinity. From that hour the young bachelor's fate was sealed. Instead of departing on the morrow, as he had intended, he lingered for a few days with the lady of his love ; proposed, and was accepted.

The young lady was Miss Carpenter by name—of French extraction—an orphan, with an annuity

of £400, travelling with her governess, under the guardianship of the Marquis of Downshire. An able critic relates:—"That the Marquis of Downshire, going on his travels, had a note of introduction from the Dean of Carlisle, to Monsieur Carpenter, of Paris. The unhappy result of the acquaintance was the elopement of Madame Carpenter, a very beautiful woman, with his Lordship. The husband did nothing in the matter except transmitting his two children—a boy and a girl—to the care of his wife; and they lived for some years under her and Lord Downshire's protection. On her death he placed the girl in a French convent for her education, and sent out the boy to a lucrative situation in India, with the stipulation that £200 of his income should go yearly to his sister. Miss Carpenter returned to London and was placed under the charge of Miss Nicholson, a governess.

. . . James Hogg insinuates that the Marquis was Charlotte Carpenter's father." What authority there is for these statements I know not; he has given none, and as I can find no collateral evidence I dismiss them as unworthy of belief.

Although not a perfect beauty, Miss Carpenter was rich in personal charms. Her form was light and graceful; her hair black and silken; her eyes



large and of the richest brown; her manners a combination of the arch gaiety of the French and the coy reserve of the English maiden. Three months from the day of engagement they were married. Scott's heart had been caught in the rebound. The question has been asked whether sudden marriages, from revulsion of feeling or disappointed love, turn out happily. Let us hope, at least, they do.

Miss Carpenter, although slightly gay and worldly, made a fairly good wife to Scott. During the first few years of their married life in Edinburgh, when their means were narrow, no woman could live more economically than Mrs. Scott. It has been hinted that when she became Lady Scott of Abbotsford she lived extravagantly and luxuriously. Well, she then had the wherewithal.

Lady Scott was a most admirable hostess, dignified and kind to a degree. Occasionally she might be a trifle injudicious. It is on record that, shortly after the publication of "Marmion," Lord Jeffrey criticised it in *The Edinburgh Review* in one of the most biting, bitter critiques ever penned, declaring that there was hardly a sentence in it characteristic of a Scotchman. This of Sir Walter Scott! The very night that unfriendly article was being set up in type, Jeffrey was engaged to dine with his friend Scott. In the forenoon of that

day, Jeffrey's conscience had seemingly smitten him—probably remembering the episode of Judas—and he sent Scott a copy of the critique in MS., with the request for a speedy reply. Scott, in reply, assured him that the article had not disturbed his digestion, though he hoped neither his booksellers nor the public would agree with the opinion it expressed, and begged he would come to dinner at the hour previously appointed. Punctual at the dinner hour Jeffrey arrived. Scott received him most complacently, and at the dinner table showed no sign of vexation. The evening went pleasantly as a marriage bell—a most enjoyable evening. At last, in the drawing-room, when Jeffrey rose to take leave, Mrs. Scott said, in her pretty half-broken English, “Well, good night, Mr. Jeffrey; dey tell me you have abused Scott in de review, and I hope Mr. Constable has paid you very well for writing it.” One would like to have had Jeffrey's photo just at that moment. The gossips in town had it that the little French lady had turned the great reviewer out of doors. He well deserved it! In this instance Mrs. Scott was not quite an ideal hostess; but her injudiciousness was only an error of judgment, not of heart. She was proud of her husband's genius, and jealous of any attacks upon his fame.

About this time, when, as Scott confessed,

“the popularity of ‘Marmion’ gave him such a heeze, he had for a moment almost lost his footing,” Mrs. Grant of Laggan observed, wittily but sarcastically, when leaving a brilliant and fashionable assembly, where Scott was flattered and almost worshipped:—“Sir Walter always seems to me like a glass through which the rays of admiration pass without sensibly affecting it; but the bit of paper that is beside it will presently be in a blaze—and no wonder.” Scott was proud, but not vain; he could estimate fame at its true value. With Lady Scott it might, as Mrs. Grant hints, be slightly different; although we cannot place much confidence in her observation. Some ladies are troubled with a laxity of narration; and Mrs. Grant vouchsafes no proof of her assertion, which is probably as much tinged with feminine venom as with truth. Be that as it may, Lady Scott did not in the slightest interfere with Sir Walter’s ambitious schemes and romantic enjoyments, nor did he interfere with her domestic arrangements and style of life. They did not cross each other’s path; they left each other to the freedom of their own will. What Scott might have been, had he married a lady like Mrs. Carlyle or his first love, who can tell? Probably it was better that he did not—better for himself, and for the world of letters.

I can only trace one little shadow in the entire career of their married life. During the acute crisis of Sir Walter's misfortune, I regret that Lady Scott was severe, fretful, murmuring—not reconciled to her altered circumstances—not so sympathetic as she might have been with poor Sir Walter. Probably this was caused by her overwhelming agony upsetting her health and shattering her nervous system. With this solitary exception, Scott's married life was a perfectly happy one. When I say perfectly, I mean relatively, as perfect happiness is not to be found in this life.

Sir Walter on one occasion illustrates this fact very graphically. Walking one day with a neighbouring proprietor, who maintained that perfect happiness could be found, to which Sir Walter demurred, "Well," said his friend, "here comes the village natural, who I believe is perfectly happy." "We shall see," said Sir Walter. "Weel, Sandy," said the gentleman to the imbecile, "are you quite happy?" "Ou, ay, quite happy." "Now you see," said the gentleman. "Not so fast, friend," said Sir Walter. "Noo, Saunders," said Scott, "is there naething ava' that bothers ye?" "No, naething, Sir Watty, but a muckle bubblyjock" (turkey-cock) "that aye flees at me when I gang for mulk. I'm sair haudden down by the bubblyjock." "Ay, ay,"

said Sir Walter to his friend, "every one has his bubblyjock." These words are true. Sir Walter himself was no exception to the rule. With all his fame and glory he was emphatically a man of sorrow. One cause of sorrow was his want of professional success at the Bar. Another was his financial misfortunes. When the crash came and he was preparing to leave his Castle Street home—"dear 39," as he called it—the record in his journal is very touching:—"It is with a sense of pain that I leave behind a parcel of trumpery prints and little ornaments, once the pride of Lady Scott's heart, but which she saw consigned with indifference to the chance of an auction. Things that have had their day of importance with me I cannot forget, though the merest trifles; but I am glad that she, with bad health and enough to vex her, has not the same useless mode of associating recollections with this unpleasant business." Another sorrow at this painful crisis was the illness and death of Lady Scott. Within a few days of her death the record is: "Still welcoming me with a smile, and asserting she is better." At other times she would gently chide Sir Walter for entering her chamber with a melancholy countenance, although she well knew the cause of his gloom to be the anticipation of her own death.

Lady Scott died at Abbotsford on May 15, 1826. Sir Walter was in Edinburgh at the time, and on the tidings of her death returned instantly. He describes his feelings as sometimes firm as the Bass Rock and sometimes as weak as the water that breaks on it. "It is not," he says, "my Charlotte, it is not the bride of my youth, the mother of my children, that will be laid among the ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, which we so often visited in gaiety and pastime. No, no!" She was buried a week after her death, and next day he says: "The whole scene floats as a sort of dream before me: the beautiful day, the grey ruins covered and hidden among clouds of foliage and flourish, where the grave, even in the lap of beauty, lay lurking and gaping for its prey." Sir Walter felt very keenly the agony of parting with her for ever.

Besides these griefs, he carried through life a secret sorrow. That farewell stanza addressed to his minstrel harp in "The Lady of the Lake" was drawn from his own experience:—

Much have I owed thy strain on life's long way,  
Through secret woes the world has never known,  
When on the weary night dawned wearier day,  
And bitterer was the grief devoured alone.

The cause of this secret sorrow was disappointment in his first love. He never got over it.

In the winter of 1827, when residing in Edinburgh, he was informed that Lady Jane, the aged mother of his first love, was living in the immediate neighbourhood. He requested a lady friend to take him to her to renew an acquaintance which had been broken for more than a generation. She complied, and it is related that the meeting was a very painful one. The record in his diary is: "Nov. 7.—Began to settle myself this morning after the hurry of mind and even of body which I have lately undergone. I went to make a visit and fairly softened myself, like an old fool, with recalling old stories, till I was fit for nothing but shedding tears and repeating verses for the whole night. This is sad work. The very grave gives up its dead, and time rolls back thirty years to add to my perplexity. I don't care. I begin to grow case-hardened, and, like a stag turning at bay, my naturally good temper grows fierce and dangerous. Yet what a romance to tell, and told, I fear, it will one day be. And then my three years of dreaming and my two years of wakening will be chronicled, doubtless. But the dead will feel no pain." More pathetic words than these were never penned.

It is touching to note that, a few years before his death, Sir Walter with his own hand transcribed from a faded MS. the following verses

addressed to "Time," which his first lady-love had sent him. They are almost prophetic.

Friend of the world oppressed with grief,  
Whose lenient hand, though slow, supplies  
The balm that lends to care relief,  
That wipes her tears, that checks her sighs,

O haste to grant thy suppliant's prayer;  
To me thy torpid calm impart;  
Rend from my brow youth's garland fair,  
But take the thorn that's in my heart.

To me thy tedious feeble pace  
Comes laden with the weight of years;  
With sighs I view morn's blushing face,  
And hail mild evening with my tears.

What a vivid panorama of the past must have swept through the mind of Scott as he sat, with grey hair and trembling hand, turning over the faded leaves of the manuscript of her who had once been the romance of his youth, and who was still the dream of his old age!



## THE POET,

SCOTT does not stand in the first rank of poets. He has not the fancy of Spenser, the delicate beauty of Shelley, the might and majesty of Milton, the all-knowing and informing power of Shakespeare, the philosophy of Wordsworth, the pathos of Burns, the dazzling splendour of his friend and contemporary Lord Byron; yet he has written poetry which the world will not willingly let die. Scott does not belong to either the "Renaissance, the Idyllic, or the Psychological school of poetry, but to the Homeric," and as such, transcends every poet since the days of Homer. He is "Homer's only successor."

Walter Scott was thirty-one years of age before he published anything of importance—an age which Keats and Shelley never reached, and which Byron only exceeded by one year and Burns by six, when they had finished their immortal works and passed away.

Scott's first attempts in poetry were a practical failure. His fame as a poet rests entirely on the "Minstrelsy of the Borders," "Marmion," and the

“Lady of the Lake.” These are Eclipse, the rest nowhere—not worth placing. Scott’s first serious venture as a poet was a thing of accident, arising from an act of benevolence. His old schoolfellow, James Ballantyne, was now publisher of a Kelso weekly newspaper. Merely to give employment to his friend’s types during the interval of their ordinary use, Scott proposed to print a selection from the old ballads which for years he had been collecting on the Borders. When the design was formed he began to arrange the ballads into book form. In this he was assisted, probably more than the world knows, by Richard Heber, an enthusiastic collector of old ballad literature, and by John Lynden, a peasant’s son, a profound scholar in languages and antiquities. The Minstrelsy thus grew upon his hands until at last it became such an assemblage of ballad literature, ancient and modern, as filled three octavo volumes. The majority of the ballads were new to the world. Those that were old appeared in superior versions. Those that were of Scott’s own composition were admirable—full of grace and spirit and graphic power. The prose that was interspersed through the work, the selection of readings, the historical annotations, rich with curious learning and enlivened by quaint stories, showed the deft hand, the delicate taste, and the ripened judgment of an

accomplished scholar. No work of Scott's after life showed the result of so much preliminary study.

The first two volumes were given to the world in 1802, and received with universal and unparalleled delight. They made an epoch in Scottish literary history. Probably Bishop Percy's reliques had prepared the way for the warm reception of the *Minstrelsy*, by the relish they had created for the simple primitive poetry of a pastoral and heroic time. Burns, too, had familiarised the Southern ear to the Doric strains of his native land. Speaking of Burns, it is a curious coincidence that Scott's first production as a poet should come into the world the very year Burns went out of it—as if nature had determined that there should be no interregnum in Scottish poesy.

The first edition of the *Minstrelsy* sold rapidly. On the publication of the second edition, Scott received from Longman £500. The publisher had no reason to be dissatisfied with his bargain—probably the best he had ever made, as subsequently the sale extended to twenty thousand copies. In literature, as a permanent means of income, Scott as yet had no hope or faith. “Let literature,” he said, “be at the utmost a staff—not a crutch.” A prudent resolution! A poet at

that time was synonymous with beggary and starvation.

A story goes that Scott, when a young man, crossing the Firth of Forth in a ferry boat along with a friend, proposed to beguile the time by writing a number of verses on a given subject. At the end of an hour's hard study, they found that they had produced only six lines between them. "It is plain," said the unconscious author to his fellow labourer, "that you and I need never think of getting our living by writing poetry."

I shall not presume to criticise the poetry of Walter Scott. To attempt to do so on my part would be a literary impertinence. It has been criticised by writers of every nationality from every possible angle of light, and the verdict has been signed, and sealed, and ratified by succeeding generations. I shall rather give a few incidents concerning it, and deduce a few incidents from it, characteristic of Scott.

It is curious to note the different effects Scott's poetry exercised over the minds of different critics and poets. Says Hazlitt: "We see grim knights and iron armour; but they are woven in silk with a careless, delicate hand, and have the softness of flowers. The poet's figures might be compared to old tapestries copied on the finest velvet."

The following ballad from the *Minstrelsy* was

the one which made so strong an impression on Thomas Campbell, the poet:—

Dark Morton, girt with many a spear,  
Murder's foul minion led the van ;  
And clashed their broadswords in the rear  
The wild Macfarlane's plaided clan.

Glencairn and stout Parkhead were nigh,  
Obsequious at their Regent's rein,  
And haggard Lindsay's iron eye,  
That saw fair Mary weep in vain.

'Mid pennoned spears, a steely grove,  
Proud Murray's plumage floated high ;  
Scarce could his trampling charger move,  
So close the minions crowded nigh.

From the raised visor's shade, his eye,  
Dark rolling glanced the ranks along ;  
And his steel truncheon, waved on high,  
Seem'd marshalling the iron throng.

But yet his saddened brow confessed  
A passing shade of doubt and awe :  
Some friend was whispering in his breast.  
Beware of injured Bothwellhaugh.

The death-shot parts—the charger springs—  
Wild rises tumult's startling roar ;  
And Murray's plummy helmet rings,  
Rings on the ground to rise no more.

Referring to some of these lines, Campbell said: "I have repeated them so often on the North Bridge that the whole fraternity of coachmen know me by tongue as I pass. To be sure, to

a mind in sober, serious, street-walking humour, it must bear the appearance of lunacy, when one stamps with a hurried pace and fervent shake of the head, which strong, pithy poetry excites."

Sir Walter himself explains the secret of this power in his diary. "I am sensible," he says, "that if there be anything good about my poetry, it is a hurried frankness of composition which pleases soldiers, sailors, and young people of bold and active disposition."

The Minstrelsy secured for Scott immense applause and a name and place in the world of letters.

Scott was in no great hurry to follow up this success. It was three years before he took the field again in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," at the bidding of his friend Lady Dalkeith. I shall give the history of the request in Sir Walter's own language: "The lovely Countess of Dalkeith, afterwards Harriet, Duchess of Buccleuch, had come to the land of her own husband with the desire of making herself acquainted with its traditions and customs. An aged gentleman of property, near Langholm, communicated to her Ladyship the story of Gilpin Horner. . . . The young lady, much delighted with the legend, enjoined on me as a task to compose a ballad on the subject. Of course to hear was to obey, and thus the

Goblin story, objected to by many as an excrescence upon the poem, was in fact the occasion of its being written." This request of Lady Dalkeith reminds us of Lady Hesketh, who desired Cowper to write for her a few pages of blank verse, and gave him at haphazard the "sofa" for a subject. He began, it is said, with no higher aim than to fulfil the commands of his female friend; and the result was that a long and most original poem was given to the world which was the foundation of Cowper's claim for immortality. "It was," continues Scott, "to the best of my recollection, by way of experiment that I composed the first two or three stanzas of 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel.' I was shortly afterwards visited by two intimate friends (Jeffrey and Wordsworth). As neither of them said much to me on the subject of the stanzas I showed them, I had no doubt that their disgust was greater than good nature chose to express. Looking upon them, therefore, as a failure, I threw the MS. into the fire. Some time afterwards I met one of my two counsellors, who inquired with considerable appearance of interest about the progress of the romance I had commenced, and was greatly surprised at hearing its fate. He confessed that neither he nor his mutual friend had been at first able to give a precise opinion of a poem so much out of the common

road, but as they walked home together to the city they had talked much on the subject, and the result was an earnest desire that I would proceed with the composition. The poem, being once licensed by the critics as fit for the market, was soon finished."

Thus, in a happy hour, was the Goblin Ballad developed into a metrical romance and ushered into the world, in 1805, as "The Lay of the Last Minstrel." The last Minstrel is the poet himself, who strives to revive the heroic memories of the olden time. The imp of a page became unmanageable in the story, and we have an amusing account, in an interesting letter to Miss Seward, how cleverly Scott rescued himself from him. "At length," says Scott, "the story appeared so uncouth that I was fain to put it into the mouth of my own Minstrel lest the nature of it should be misunderstood, and I should be suspected of setting up a new school of poetry instead of a feeble attempt to imitate the old. In the process of the romance, the page, intended to be a principal person in the work, contrived (from the baseness of his natural propensities, I suppose) to slink downstairs into the kitchen; and now he must e'en abide there."

Scott, in his reference to setting up a new school of poetry instead of the old, is surely either



joking or unconsciously misinterpreting his own motives. I suspect the reason of the aged Harper being introduced was a graceful method of doing honour to his young friend the Countess, who had inspired him with such love and loyalty. Anyhow the stratagem of introducing the old Minstrel was a master-stroke of genius which rendered the poem a perfect success. Nothing of deeper pathos was ever penned than the delicate, trembling, reverent attitude of the aged Harper in the following lines which Pitt admired so much :—

The humble boon was soon obtained ;  
The aged Minstrel audience gained.  
But, when he reached the room of state,  
Where she, with all her ladies, sate,  
Perchance he wished his boon denied :  
For, when to tune his harp he tried,  
His trembling hand had lost the ease  
Which marks security to please ;  
And scenes, long past, of joy and pain,  
Came wildering o'er his aged brain—  
He tried to tune his harp in vain.  
The pitying Duchess praised its chime,  
And gave him heart, and gave him time,  
Till every string's according glee  
Was blended into harmony.  
Amid the strings his fingers strayed,  
And an uncertain warbling made—  
And oft he shook his hoary head.  
But when he caught the measure wild,

The old man raised his face and smiled ;  
And lightened up his faded eye  
With all a poet's ecstasy !  
In varying cadence, soft or strong,  
He swept the sounding chords along ;  
The present scene, the future lot,  
His toils, his wants, were all forgot ;  
Cold diffidence and age's frost  
In the full tide of song were lost :  
Each blank, in faithless memory void,  
The poet's glowing thought supplied ;  
And while his harp responsive rung,  
'Twas thus the latest Minstrel sung.

“ These lines,” says Pitt, “ have exercised on me an effect which I might have expected in painting, but could never have fancied capable of being given in poetry.”

The “ Lay ” contains fewer grand passages and less striking imagery than some of the subsequent poems, yet it is a work of art conveyed in such simple and melodious strains as had not been heard since the days of Burns. It revived with picturesque vividness the spirit of the ancient knights and lovers of olden times, and at once gave Scott a foremost place in the ranks of literature as one of the great original writers of this century. Its unprecedented success determined the future course of his life. From the moment of its publication the world was at his feet.

His next great poem was “ Marmion.” Pro-

bably this poem had never been written, had it not been to get the wherewithal to assist his brother Thomas in financial difficulties. It was composed in haste, and the MS. sent to the press long before the story was finished or the author had determined how the romance should be wound up. Indeed, nearly all his works were sent forth to the world in this way. "I am very fortunate," said Sir Walter to a friend, "never knowing how I am to get to the end of my tale; so it is, therefore, no wonder if my readers afterwards partake of the same perplexity. This reminds me, though it is *apropos des bottes*, of what happened with Coleridge one evening, after he had taken a double dose of opium. He had, as usual, talked a long time, and on coming to a full stop, asked one of his admirers whether he had made himself understood. 'Perfectly,' said the other, 'I comprehend you in the clearest manner.' 'Then you must be a far deeper philosopher than I am,' said the poet, 'for I have not myself understood one sentence that I have uttered for the last half-hour.'"

Part of the poem was composed by Scott on horseback. "Oh, man," said he to a friend, "I had many a grand gallop among those braes when I was thinking of 'Marmion.'"

A critic remarks that Scott "was a painter of

action rather than of character in its higher grades." These words are true. All the heroes and heroines of his novels are insipid, except the Master of Ravenswood, and Jeannie Deans, Margaret, in "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," who represents his first love, and Bertram Risingham in "Rokeby." Scott's best characters are "heroic scoundrels," like Marmion, the forger, the gay deceiver, the betrayer of innocence. "The worst of all my undertakings," says Scott himself, "is that my rogue always, in despite of myself, turns out my hero." The same ill luck befell Milton in his "Paradise Lost."

The painting of character is not Scott's strong point—but action. "To me," said Scott, "the wandering over the field of Bannockburn was the source of more exquisite pleasure than gazing upon the celebrated landscape from the battlements of Stirling Castle." Scott thought that "Marmion" was the greatest of his poems. It has the character of one of his best prose romances worked up into verse.

It is affirmed by some that Scott, as a poet, could not portray the gentler feelings—that he had no depth of pathos, no touching tenderness, no delicate beauty. That affirmation is not true. What could be more touchingly beautiful than the

following charming little song from "Marmion,"  
sung by Fitz-Eustace in the Inn?

Where shall the lover rest,  
Whom the fates sever  
From his true maiden's breast,  
Parted for ever?  
Where, through groves deep and high,  
Sounds the far billow,  
Where early violets die,  
Under the willow.

There, through the summer day,  
Cool streams are laving;  
There, while the tempests sway,  
Scarce are boughs waving;  
There, thy rest shalt thou take,  
Parted for ever,  
Never again to wake,  
Never, O never.

Where shall the traitor rest,  
He, the deceiver,  
Who could win maiden's breast,  
Ruin, and leave her?  
In the lost battle,  
Borne down by the flying,  
Where mingles war's rattle  
With groans of the dying.

Her wing shall the eagle flap  
O'er the false-hearted;  
His warm blood the wolf shall lap,  
Ere life be parted.  
Shame and dishonour sit  
On his grave ever;  
Blessing shall hallow it—  
Never, O never.

In the battle of Flodden Field, as a descriptive poet, Scott is at his best. The surrounding scenery, the antique dress of the warriors, the rapid movements, the daring actions, the martial music, the prancing war chargers, the wild blood-shot eye of battle rolling under lids of flame, the exultant shouts of the victors, the agonising groans of the dying—all are vividly portrayed by a master hand. It is the grandest battle scene in ancient or modern poetry :

But as they left the darkening heath,  
More desperate grew the strife of death.  
The English shafts in volleys hailed,  
In headlong charge their horse assailed :  
Front, flank, and rear, the squadrons sweep,  
To break the Scottish circle deep,  
    That fought around their king.  
But yet, though thick the shafts as snow,  
Though charging knights like whilwinds go,  
Though bill-men ply the ghastly blow,  
    Unbroken was the ring ;  
The stubborn spearmen still made good  
Their dark impenetrable wood,  
Each stepping where his comrade stood,  
    The instant that he fell.  
No thought was there of dastard flight ;  
Linked in the serried phalanx tight,  
Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,  
    As fearlessly and well ;  
Till utter darkness closed her wing  
O'er their thin host and wounded king.

\* \* \* \*

Tradition, legend, tune, and song,  
Shall many an age the wail prolong :  
Still from the sire the son shall hear  
Of the stern strife, and carnage drear,  
    Of Flodden's fatal field,  
Where shivered was fair Scotland's spear,  
And broken was her shield!

The Battle of Flodden is more Homeric than Homer's best.

Jeffrey, who did not find out Scott's excellence until the public compelled him, says :—" Of all the poetical battles which have been fought from the days of Homer, there is none comparable, for interest and animation, for breadth of drawing and magnificence of effect, with the battle scene in 'Marmion.' There is a flight of five or six hundred lines in which the writer never stoops his wing nor wavers in his course, but carries the reader forward with a more rapid, sustained, and lofty movement than any epic bard that we can remember."

"Marmion" in plan may be imperfect, in the choice of hero unfortunate, in composition unequal; yet it is a noble poem—it is our Scottish Iliad. Nevertheless, on its appearance in the world, it was welcomed by the leading journal of the day in a biting, bitter, unfriendly, unfair critique. The review was the *Edinburgh*—the reviewer Lord Jeffrey. "To write a modern romance of chivalry,"

said Jeffrey, in his review of "Marmion," "seems to be much such a phantasy as to build a modern abbey or an English pagoda." But the severest and unkindest lash of all was the imputation of the neglect of Scottish character and feeling. "There is scarcely one trace of true nationality, of patriotism, introduced into the whole poem; and Mr. Scott's only expression of admiration for the beautiful country to which he belongs is put, if we rightly remember, into the mouth of one of his southern favourites." Jeffrey posing as a greater patriot than Scott is one of the best modern jokes on record. How applicable to Lord Jeffrey and his criticism, are the words of Johnson to a friend:—"Sir, patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." Jeffrey's criticism of "Marmion" had far-reaching consequences. Shortly after this episode, Scott discovered that the political principles of the *Edinburgh* were much too Whiggish for his Toryism. He had almost reached the standpoint of Johnson, who stoutly maintained that Whiggism was a "negation of all principle." "Sir," said he to Boswell, "the first Whig was the Devil. Take it upon my word and experience, sir, wherever you see a Whig you see a rascal." Scott stopped his literary contributions to the Review, and next his subscription. In Constable's list of subscribers to the *Edinburgh*, there appears



opposite Scott's name, an indignant dash of Constable's pen—"Stopt!!!"

Scott's next step was to establish John Ballantyne as a publisher in opposition to Constable. John Murray, the famous publisher, hearing of Scott's repugnance to the *Edinburgh Review*, journeyed from London to Edinburgh to have a personal interview with Scott as to the possibility of starting another review as a counterblast to the *Edinburgh*. The result was the establishment of the *London Quarterly*, which owed its existence to Walter Scott more than to any other man. The *Quarterly* was of the utmost service to morals and to letters. It effectively broke down that majestic WE, in which the editor of the *Edinburgh* enveloped himself. The public began to realise that there might be salvation for an author, although—to put it mildly—condemned by the *Edinburgh*. The *Quarterly* was a great success. The establishing of Ballantyne as a publisher was a blunder. Scott, unfortunately, became involved with Ballantyne, and Ballantyne with Constable, and the end of it was misery and financial ruin to all the three.

Carlyle, as we have already said, talks sneeringly of Scott's insane craze of writing merely to get gold to buy farms and upholstery. If that is true, we cannot as yet have reached that period of Scott's life. "The Minstrelsy" was published to

assist an old school companion in business. "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" was written to oblige Lady Dalkeith. "Marmion" was written to help his brother Thomas in financial difficulties; and "Don Roderick" was written as an act of charity to assist the patriotic Portuguese. These poems at least were not written "to buy farms and upholstery."

"The Lady of the Lake" is unquestionably Scott's greatest poem. Its composition marks the best era in the annals of his mind as to poetical power. He then ruled over a literary world; for he had made people judges of poetry who had never dreamed of it before, and "inspired those with a love of books who heretofore were amply contented with a weekly newspaper." The subject of the poem suits Scott's style and genius admirably. He requires breadth of canvas for his gorgeous colourings and rapid movements. What a field for the exercise of all his qualities! "There can be no doubt," says Dryden, "that the French are as much better critics than the English as they are worse poets." If these words are true, the opinion of the late M. Taine should count for something. He says: "*La grande affaire pour un artiste est de rencontrer des sujets qui conviennent à son talent.*"

"The Lady of the Lake" luxuriates in vivid de-

scriptions of romantic Highland scenery. It portrays the grace, the dignity, the gallantry of old Scottish times, free from their rudeness and grossness. It was the first revelation to the world of the charming scenery and romantic clan life of the Highlands. It converted them from a wilderness, at which cultivated thought shuddered, to a charming retreat where tourists from every clime pay an annual pilgrimage. Along the solitary highway was suddenly heard the rushing of horses and brilliant equipages. The only hotels were hovels, dignified by the name of inns. Enormous sums were charged and paid ungrudgingly for bad beds, miserable breakfasts, and wretched dinners, composed chiefly of mutton, which Johnson said was ill-fed, ill-killed, ill-kept, and ill-cooked. Scott made the Highlands.

Some years after "The Lady of the Lake" had been published, a traveller met on Ben Lomond an old Highlander who had been a guide from the north side of the mountain for forty years; "but that deevil of a Walter Scott, that everybody makes such a work about," he exclaimed, with vehemence, "I wish I had him to ferry over Loch Lomond. I'd sink the boat wi' him, if I drooned mysel' into the bargain. Ever since he wrote that 'Lady of the Lake,' as they call it, everybody goes away to see that hole of a Loch Katrine,

and goes round by Luss, and I've only had two shentlemen to guide all this blessed season. The deil confound his ladies and his lakes too, say I." The poem appeared in 1810, the purchase price paid by the publisher being £4,000.

When "The Lady of the Lake" was given to the world, one of his lady friends remonstrated with him on thus risking the laurels which he had already won. Scott, however, realised the contingency, which his fair friend could not, that a successful author is equally in danger of the diminution of his fame whether he continues or ceases to write; that the regard of the public is not to be kept but by tribute, although in every new attempt there is hazard. Scott realised this perfectly, as is evident from his eulogy on Byron, where he says there has been no reposing under the shade of his laurels, no living upon the resource of past reputation, none of that coddling and petty precaution which little authors call "taking care of their fame." Scott could not have described more accurately his own character. He replied to his lady friend, with characteristic and prophetic spirit: "If I fail I will write prose all my life; but if I succeed,

Up wi' the bonnie blue bonnet,  
The dirk, an' the feather, an' a'."

Had it failed, instead of succeeding, as it did,

beyond his most sanguine expectation, Scott would probably have written no more poetry, at least not in the same style.

Jeffrey and Erskine, indeed, implored Scott to alter his style and write more classically, but he declined. He was a shrewd man of the world. He began his career by saying that he "must make an honourable provision against the contingencies of life." As an author he wished to obtain gold as well as fame. "As to the fame to be derived from 'Don Roderick,'" said Scott, "I care very little. The best result would be the realisation of some hard cash for the poor people who are to be benefited by the sale." Carlyle sneers at Scott for writing to get money to buy farms. I would no more blame him for this than I would Shakespeare for writing plays to fill the Globe Theatre to get money to purchase a comfortable house on the Avon. Indeed, the greatest writers have written for bread—Homer, Shakespeare, Pope, Johnson, and a host of others. "No doubt," says a writer, "the man seems morally greater, as long as there are no money claims upon him, who sings his own song careless whether supper follows or not, to the man who moulds his singing according to the amount of supper he will get, and Scott must bear the disadvantages of such a comparison." I am neither praising nor blaming Scott

for the attitude which he thus assumes as an author. I am only giving an account of his conduct and career. Scott had no lofty pretensions regarding authorship. Nor had Johnson. "Sir," said the sturdy moralist to a friend, "no man but a blockhead would write except for money." Scott had poetry to sell, and he adopted the style most attractive in the market, for which he was paid the highest price poet ever received—"Just half-a-crown a line," says Byron, scornfully. Scott realised the truth of Johnson's assertion that "Every man who writes thinks he can amuse or inform mankind, and they must be the judges of his pretensions." The enormous sale of his poems convinced Scott that his style suited the taste of the public, which proved to be a sounder judge than Jeffrey or Erskine. If the public had desired Scott to write more classically, he would probably have endeavoured to do so. Apart altogether from this aspect of the question, Scott, in the introduction to the third canto of "Marmion," defends his poetry. His defence is in the form of a poetic epistle to his friend Erskine, who had again implored Scott to change his style:—

But say, my Erskine, hast thou weighed  
That secret power by all obeyed?  
Howe'er derived, its force confessed  
Rules with despotic sway the breast,  
And drags us on by viewless chain,

While taste and reason plead in vain.  
Thus while I ape the measures wild  
Of tales that charmed me yet a child,  
Rude though they be, still with the chime  
Return the thoughts of earlier time ;  
And feelings, roused in life's first day,  
Glow in the line, and prompt the lay.  
Though no broad river swept along,  
To claim, perchance, heroic song ;  
Though scarce a puny streamlet's speed  
Claimed homage from a shepherd's reed,  
Yet was poetic impulse given,  
By the green hill and clear blue heaven.  
From me, thus nurtured, dost thou ask  
The classic poet's well-conned task ?  
Nay, Erskine, nay—on the wild hill  
Let the wild heathbell flourish still ;  
Cherish the tulip, prune the vine,  
But freely let the woodbine twine,  
And leave untrimmed the eglantine :  
Nay, my friend, nay—since oft thy praise  
Hath given fresh vigour to my lays,  
Since oft thy judgment could refine  
My flattened thought, or cumbrous line,  
Still kind, as is thy wont, attend,  
And in the minstrel spare the friend.  
Though wild as cloud, as stream, as gale,  
Flow forth, flow unrestrained, my tale !

That defence, if defence was required,<sup>7</sup> is thoroughly satisfactory and absolutely conclusive.

However, be that as it may, "The Lady of the Lake" was received with boundless enthusiasm. During the writing of this poem Scott was subject to fits of absence. His heart was in the

Highlands. One evening he mistook another house in Castle Street for his own—"Dear 39"—but murmured, when he discovered his mistake, "Ah! there are too many bairns' bonnets here for this house to be mine." Reminding us of the old Scotch judge, overtaken in liquor at a dinner party, who managed to steer his way successfully to his residence in Moray Place, but could not quite make up his mind which house was his own. In his dilemma, he appealed to a constable, "Friend, d'ye ken whaur the Lord President o' the Court o' Session stops?" After flashing his bull's-eye in the judge's face he replied, in amazement, "My Lord, you are the Lord President yourself." "I ken that," quoth the Judge, "but I want to ken whaur he stops."

The first and second cantos of the poem are magnificently written, but the third is unquestionably Scott's masterpiece. Lord Byron is perhaps the only other poet that ever lived who could have written it besides Scott himself. What could Erskine or Jeffrey want finer or more classical than the following stanza, as Malise appears with the cross of fire?

The fisherman forsook the strand,  
The swarthy smith took dirk and brand,  
With changèd cheer, the mower blithe  
Left in the half-cut swath his scythe;



The herds without a keeper strayed,  
The plough was in mid-furrow stayed,  
The falconer tossed his hawk away,  
The hunter left the stag at bay;  
Prompt at the signal of alarms,  
Each son of Alpine rushed to arms;  
So swept the tumult and affray  
Along the margin of Achray.  
Alas, thou lovely lake! that e'er  
Thy banks should echo sounds of fear!  
The rocks, the bosky thickets, sleep  
So stilly on thy bosom deep,  
The lark's blythe carol from the cloud,  
Seems for the scene too gaily loud.

How exquisitely charming what follows.  
Malise, carrying the "fatal symbol," finds the  
maidens singing over the bier of Duncan the  
loveliest dirge that ever was written :—

He is gone on the mountain,  
He is lost to the forest,  
Like a summer-dried fountain,  
When our need was the sorest.  
The font, reappearing,  
From the rain-drops shall borrow,  
But to us comes no cheering,  
To Duncan no morrow!

The hand of the reaper  
Takes the ears that are hoary,  
But the voice of the weeper  
Wails manhood in glory;  
The autumn winds rushing  
Waft the leaves that are serest,  
But our flower was in flushing,  
When blighting was nearest.

Fleet foot on the correi,  
Sage counsel in cumber,  
Red hand in the foray,  
How sound is thy slumber!  
Like the dew on the mountain,  
Like the foam on the river,  
Like the bubble on the fountain,  
Thou art gone, and for ever!

As a poet Scott had now reached the zenith of his fame, and reigned supreme over a crowd of worshippers. His subsequent poems did not increase, but rather diminished, his reputation. "Don Roderick" appeared in July, 1811. One day, during the writing of this poem, Scott happened to be in John Ballantyne's, where he met a friend in whose literary judgment he had considerable confidence. He proposed that his friend should walk home with him to dinner, and act the part of his "old woman," as he intended to read aloud the beginning of Roderick, and to tell him truly whether it sounded like sense or nonsense. "I wished," said his friend, "to go home to dress." "If you will go home," said Scott, "be it so, though we had much better steer at once for Castle Street, where dinner waits, an object of some consideration to one who breakfasts before nine in the morning. As for dressing, when we are quite alone it is out of the question; life is not long enough for such

fiddle-faddle. Suppose we took a coach, drove down to Holyrood, and got the loan of Darnley's boots for the occasion; perhaps this might render you welcome, if possible, in Mrs. Scott's estimation; but be assured the silk stockings are of no consequence, so come along." Scott's badinage reminds us of a Lord of Sessions, who one day met a friend from the country in Princes Street, Edinburgh. "In town to-night, old boy?" said the Judge. "Yes," replied his friend. "Then come out this evening," said his lordship, "and dine with me." "Can't," replied his friend, "I have no clothes." "Come without them," said his lordship. "Coachman, drive on."

"After dinner," says Scott's friend, "when Mrs. Scott, whom he usually styled 'Mamma,' had retired, and a bottle of 'Marmion'—so called because presented to him by Constable on the publication of 'Marmion'—was placed on the table, he went to the library and brought the MS. containing nearly half the poem of 'Don Roderick.'" This portion, notwithstanding the difficulties of the Spenserian stanza, had been composed in about a week. Never did any author read his own productions with less effect than Scott. He always read poetry in a monotonous humdrum manner, without emphasis of delivery. His friend was decided in his approbation, more especially as

it was in a new style which would establish his fame, in spite of the cavillers who had asserted that Scott could not write except in ballad form or without a tale of mystery to lead him on. After Scott and his friend had discussed the "Don" and the bottle of "Marmion" they retired to the drawing-room, where shortly afterwards Scott left him in charge of Mrs. Scott and her daughters, and withdrew to the library. The guest took his departure for the evening and entered the study to take leave of his host, whom he found busily engaged at "Roderick." "Look here," said Scott, "I have just begun to copy over the rhymes that you heard a little ago and applauded so much. With all deference to your judgment there are a thousand faults which I must try to mend, and mended they shall be—or, at least, exchanged for others. To-morrow morning, before Parliament House time, I shall have eight or ten more stanzas complete, and so will soon arrive at the end of my tether. I keep early hours, and Wallace will not suffer me to rest after six in the morning—come, good dog, and help the poet." At this hint Wallace seated himself upright on a chair next his master, who offered him a newspaper, which he directly seized, looking very wise and holding it firmly and contentedly in his mouth. Scott looked at him with great satisfac-

tion. "Very well," said he, "now we shall get on." The guest accordingly left them abruptly, knowing that his absence would be the best company.

The profits of this poem were sent as a subscription to the fund for the relief of the patriotic Portuguese who had seen their lands wasted and their houses burned in the course of Messena's last campaign. Concerning this act of benevolence Lord Dalkeith writes:—"Those with ample fortunes and thicker heads may easily give a hundred guineas to a subscription, but the man is really to be envied who can draw that sum from his own brain and apply the produce to so exalted a purpose."

The novelty of the poem, both as to its subject and manner of composition, gave rise to much criticism. "Roderick," as Scott himself anticipated, was not too popular. "I suspect," said Scott to a friend, "that the 'Don' will not be over popular, but I have derived amusement from writing it, merely because it is a kind of measure that I have not tried before, and it was pleasant to find the Spenserian stanza much more easy of execution than I had anticipated."

"The Lord of the Isles," published in 1815, showed exhaustion in a sad degree. It read more like an imitation of Scott by an inferior hand than a

new work of the author. "It had the rush without the force—the sound and fury, but not the strength—the eloquence, but not the inspiration of his former poems."

The comparative failure of this poem determined the author to lay aside his singing robe—the primitive music—and devote himself to prose.

It is on record that one evening, some days after the publication of this poem, Scott requested James Ballantyne to call on him, and the printer found him alone in his library working at the third volume of "Guy Mannering." "Well, James," he said, "I have given you a week—what are people saying about 'The Lord of the Isles'?"

"I hesitated a little," says the printer, "after the fashion of Gil Blas, but he speedily brought the matter to a point. 'Come,' he said, 'speak out, my good fellow; what has put it into your head to be on so much ceremony with me all of a sudden? But I see how it is, the result is given in one word—disappointment.' My silence admitted his inference to the fullest extent. His countenance certainly did look rather blank for a few seconds; in truth, he had been wholly unprepared for the event, for it is a singular fact that before the public, or rather the booksellers, had given their decision, he had no conception whether he had written well or ill. However, he instantly resumed

his spirit and expressed his wonder rather that his poetical popularity should have continued so long than that it should have now at last given way. At length he said with perfect cheerfulness, 'Well, well, James, so be it; but you know we must not droop, for we can't afford to give over. Since one line has failed, we must just stick to something else,' and so he dismissed me and resumed this novel."

These are brave words, none nobler in the world of literature. So might Shakespeare have spoken, but none other except Scott.

Over these last poems criticism will utter no word of blame. Various causes contributed to the decline of Scott's fame as a poet. While writing these latter poems Scott encountered the first threatenings of the financial storm which ultimately overwhelmed him in 1826, in the form of a series of missives from John Ballantyne. To one of these Scott sent for answer, "For heaven's sake, treat me as a man and not as a milk cow." These harassing missives concerning money matters were not conducive to poetic inspiration.

Apart altogether from the mere merits of the poems, there were other causes which contributed to the decline of Scott's fame. In 1814 young Byron appeared in the poetic firmament—a bright and morning star, and men naturally worship the

rising, not the setting, sun. Still, this very year, Byron showed loyalty to Scott in sending him a presentation copy of the "Giaour" inscribed thus: "To the monarch of Parnassus from one of his subjects."

About this time Scott refused the crown of Poet Laureate. To the Prince Regent, he writes that "it was fit only to be worn by a man of literature, who had no other views in life"; and recommending Southey, who was offered and accepted the vacant office.

Another cause which contributed to the decline of Scott's popularity as a poet was the blaze of reputation which heralded his advent as a novelist on the appearance of "Waverley." Paradoxical as it may sound, Scott the novelist vanquished Scott the poet. He silenced his own praise.



## THE NOVELIST.

It was fortunate that, in defiance of the opinion of an incapable critic, Scott, in 1814, gave "Waverley" to the world instead of to the flames. Carlyle, in his severe castigation of Scott's rapid writing, has made an exception of "Waverley." "On the whole," he says, "contrasting 'Waverley,' which was carefully written, with most of its followers, which were written extempore, one may regret the extempore method." Extempore? Mistaken judgment—more reprehensible than extempore writing. Not one of its fellows was written more extempore than "Waverley." Scott informed his friend Morritt that "the last two volumes were written in three weeks." Lockhart has given an interesting description of how rapidly "Waverley" was composed. He was dining one evening with William Menzies, afterwards a Supreme Judge at the Cape. They were carousing in a room looking northwards to Castle Street, when suddenly a shade came over the face of Menzies, who was seated opposite Lockhart. "Are you well enough?" "Yes; at least when I change

places with you I shall. But the fact is there is a confounded hand in sight of me here, which has often bothered me before, and it won't let me fill my glass with right good will. It never stops. Page after page it throws on the pile of MSS., and still it goes on." "Pooh!" said Lockhart, glancing across and seeing the hand, "it is that of some stupid, engrossing, everlasting clerk." "No," replied the other, "it is that of Walter Scott!" The hand was at that moment writing "Waverley." If that whirlwind pace is not extempore writing I know not what is.

A fortunate day for Scott and the world was the opening of the old drawer, in search of fishing-tackle, when he discovered the condemned MS. of "Waverley." For Scott it was the opening of a mine of wealth. For the world it was the opening of a stream of literature, destined to amuse, gladden, elevate, instruct, and bless millions of the human race until the end of time. Remembering how Scott's friend predicted the failure of "Waverley," and Herder dissuading Goethe against "Faust," Hume trying to turn his friend Robertson from "Charles V." as a subject for his pen, Pope advising against the production of "Cato," Addison deprecating a recast of the "Rape of the Lock"—let friends and carping critics beware of their advice. Let authors not be

discouraged by unfavourable criticism "rashly to burn the children of their brain." Let them, as Scott did, not grudge the worthless trash lumber room; perhaps one day it may turn out to be a priceless treasure. If not, it at least will be useful, in future years, to mark the development and history of the author's mind.

Many reasons have been advanced why the *Waverley Novels* were given to the world anonymously. Lockhart ascribes this secrecy to "the habit of mystery which had grown upon Scott during his secret partnership with the Ballantynes." Hutton, in "*English Men of Letters*," has ably refuted this surmise. He says "that Lockhart seems to be confounding two very different phases of Scott's character. No doubt he was, as a professional man, a little ashamed of his commercial speculation and unwilling to betray it. But he was far from ashamed of his literary enterprise." Quite so. Hutton, however, has given two reasons for this profound secrecy of Scott, which are equally untenable with Lockhart's surmise. Hutton says "that at first Scott was very anxious lest a comparative failure, or even a more moderate success in a less ambitious sphere than that of poetry, should endanger the great reputation he had gained as a poet. That was apparently the first reason for secrecy.

But, over and above this, it is clear that the mystery stimulated Scott's imagination and saved him trouble as well."

That is what Hutton says. Here is what Sir Walter himself says was the reason for maintaining his incognito; and why we should not accept his own statement I know not. To Morritt, a confidant from whom he never disguised and to whom he never dissembled his real feelings, Scott writes a few days after the publication of "Waverley."—July 24, 1814:—"I shall never own 'Waverley.' My chief reason is, that it would prevent me the pleasure of writing again. In truth, I am not sure it would be considered quite decorous for me, as a Clerk of Session, to write novels. Judges being monks, clerks are a sort of lay brethren, from whom some solemnity of walk and conduct may be expected. So whatever I may do of this kind I shall, like Othello, 'whistle down the wind and let it prey at fortune.'"

However that may be, although the incognito puzzled and perplexed the outside world, a few cultured men, like Jeffrey, knew perfectly well who was the author. In a letter to Morritt, dated 9th July, 1814, two days after the publication of "Waverley," Scott writes:—"It has made a very strong impression here, and the good people of Edinburgh are busied in praising the author and

in finding out originals for the portraits it contains. Jeffrey has offered to make oath that it is mine."

Captain Medwin also, in his conversations with Lord Byron, relates that he asked his noble friend if he was certain about these novels being Sir Walter Scott's. To which Lord Byron replied, "Scott as much as owned himself the author of 'Waverley' to me in Murray's shop. I was talking to him about that novel, and lamented that its author had not carried back the story to the time of the Revolution. Scott, entirely off his guard, replied, 'Ay, I might have done so, but——' there he stopped. It was in vain to attempt to correct himself; he looked confused, and relieved his embarrassment by a precipitate retreat."

"I have no recollection whatever," says Sir Walter, "of this scene taking place. I certainly never hoped to impose upon Lord Byron in a case of the kind; and from the manner in which he uniformly expressed himself, I knew his opinion was entirely formed, and that any disclamation of mine would have savoured of affectation. I do not mean to insinuate that the incident did not happen, but only that it could hardly have occurred exactly under the circumstances narrated, without my recollecting something positive on the subject."

Be that as it may, Byron and Jeffrey and others were at no loss to see that only the same mind which had portrayed the times of the Jameses in "Marmion" and "The Lady of the Lake," could have resuscitated the court and camp of Prince Charles Edward.

The secret spring of the great magician's power was the realisation, in all its depth and meaning, of the old Scotch proverb that "Truth is stranger than fiction," that "There is no romance like the romance of real life."

Scott accordingly is but the inspired recorder of truth and history. He has ransacked the archives of ancient Scottish story—its old ballad literature and black-letter lore—and poured the quintessence of these moth-eaten, musty records upon his fascinating pages. He has exhausted the romantic scenery of his native land. What a vivid panorama passes before us in these romances! Kings and Queens, Lords and Ladies, Knights and Templars, Preachers and Warriors, Judges and Juries, Lawyers and Clients, Gipsies and Beggars, Wandering Minstrels and Village Fools—all are conjured up by the great wizard to play their immortal part in the Waverley Novels.

To attempt, in the closing years of this nineteenth century, a critical analysis of the Waverley

romances would be, if not a literary impertinence, a work of supererogation. Competent critics have long ago sat in judgment on these romances, and their verdict, which has been signed and sealed by succeeding generations, is now unalterable. We propose rather to give a brief account of the principal novels upon which Scott's claim for immortality must rest; to quote illustrations therefrom of his pathos, humour, and power of description; and to glance at a few of the characters in his picture gallery which he has painted for all time. To those who know the Waverley romances, the following pages will refresh their memory; to those (and I regret the number is so many) educated young men and women of this generation who know them not at all, or very little, it may create an interest and a desire to know them better.

"Waverley, or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since," was Scott's first and, some think, best novel. 'Tis sixty years since—the point of time at which the past is seen at its best, in all its clearness and vividness, with all its light and shade—not too near to be overlooked, not too distant to be forgotten.

Strange to say that Constable and his house had considerable misgivings as to the publication of "Waverley." This has not been uncommon in

the history of popular works. Johnson's "Vanity of Human Wishes," Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield," Byron's "Childe Harold," Carlyle's "Sartor," and Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," had to go the round of the trade before they were accepted. Doubtless many real masterpieces have been strangled in their effort to be born.

The first five chapters of "Waverley" go wearily, and might have been shortened with advantage. Scott sometimes did not know when he had said enough. No sooner, however, does he get a glimpse of the Highlands than his soul is on fire. We catch his enthusiasm. The illusion is complete. We almost fancy that we are treading the heather. The gorgeous scenery, ruddy with the tints of autumn or wild and bare in its winter nakedness—the lonely mountain lake, the bleak hillside, the frowning pass—

"And mountains that like giants stand,  
To sentinel enchanted land;  
Crag, knoll, and mound confusedly hurled,  
The fragments of an earlier world." \*

What a background on which to delineate the immortal pictures which he has painted for all time!

In "Waverley," we have the hero—"a sneaking

\* From "The Lady of the Lake."



piece of imbecility," as Scott himself calls him; the old Baron of Bradwardine, with his pedantry and whimsicality; the hopping, rhyming, ranting, but deeply pathetic David Gellatley, the innocent; that prince of Highland robbers, the redoubtable Donald Bean; the high-souled Flora MacIvor, one of Scott's few genuine heroines; and her brother, the proud and daring chieftain, the last of his clan.

What a touching scene is that at Carlisle!—perhaps the most thrilling and tragic matter out of Shakespeare in the language. A neighbouring farmer had witnessed the execution of the Jacobite rebels at Carlisle; he recounted it to young Scott at Sandy-Knowe, and to this tale of horror poured into the ear of the boy-poet we are indebted for the pathetic trial and death scene recounted in "Waverley." A short quotation must suffice:—

"Waverley entered the tapestried apartment of Flora, whom he found in tears, sewing her brother's shroud. 'Do you remember,' she said, with a ghastly smile, 'you once found me making Fergus's bridal favours, and now I am sewing his burial garment. Our friends here,' she continued, with suppressed emotion, 'are to give hallowed earth in their chapel to the bloody relics of the last Vich Ian Vohr. But they will not all rest

together. No!—his head—I shall not have the last miserable consolation of kissing the cold pale lips of my dear, dear Fergus.’ The unfortunate Flora, after one or two hysterical sobs, fainted in her chair. When she revived, ‘Give this,’ she said, ‘to your betrothed, my dearest Rose; it is her poor Flora’s only ornament of value.’ She put into his hands a case containing the chain of diamonds with which she used to decorate her hair. ‘To me it is in future useless. The kindness of my friends has secured me a retreat in the convent of the Scottish Benedictine Nuns in Paris. To-morrow—if indeed I can survive to-morrow—I step forward on my journey with this venerable sister. And now, Mr. Waverley, adieu, and think sometimes on the friends you have lost.’ She gave him her hand, on which Edward shed a torrent of tears, withdrew from the apartment, and returned to the town of Carlisle.”

On that scene I shall utter no word of comment.

“Waverley” was published in July, 1814. Although, at this crisis, Scott’s fame and fortune were staked on his new venture, yet it is interesting to note the frigid tranquillity with which he dismissed “Waverley” from his desk, and awaited the decision of the literary world. No sooner was it launched than Scott started on a six weeks’ yachting cruise, where it was impossible

for him to hear of the success or failure of "Waverley." Scott loved a sea life, which Johnson hated. "Sir," said Johnson, "no man will go to sea who has contrivance enough to get himself into gaol." Not so thought Scott. The yachting party consisted of the Sheriffs of the Orkneys, Lanarkshire, and Forfarshire, and included Stephenson, the celebrated engineer—all intimate friends, boon companions of Scott.

James Hogg wrote a curious letter to Lord Byron concerning this cruise, which his lordship thus quizzically notices in one of his epistles to Moore. "Oh! I have had the most amusing letter from Hogg the Ettrick Minstrel and Shepherd. Scott, he says, is gone to the Orkneys in a gale of wind; during which wind, he affirms, the said Scott he is sure is not at his ease, to say the least of it. Lord, Lord, if these home-keeping minstrels had crossed your Atlantic or my Mediterranean, and had tasted a little open boating in a white squall, or a gale in the 'Gut,' or the Bay of Biscay with no gale at all, how it would enliven them and introduce them to a few of the sensations."

Scott, however, enjoyed the cruise immensely and gathered materials which he worked up into "The Pirate."

When Scott landed, the first letter put into his

hands was one from the Duke of Buccleuch, intimating the death of the Duchess, and desiring to see him as soon as possible. The sad news was a great blow to him. When he reached Edinburgh he found "Waverley" in a blaze of popularity. Scott possessed the modesty of genius, always underrating his own work, and declining to accept the fame that was his due, "sometimes ascribing his success to novelty, sometimes to fashion," now to one temporary influence, now to another—to any rather than to his own merit. It is pleasant, therefore, to find from the following passage, to us, one of the most precious in all his writings, that he *did* derive some pleasure from his popularity, that he did consent to taste the delicious brimming cup which other authors drain with such gusto. "I have seldom," he says, "felt more satisfaction than when, returning from a pleasure voyage, I found 'Waverley' in the zenith of popularity, and public curiosity in full cry after the name of the author. The knowledge that I had the public approbation was like having the property of a hidden treasure, and more gratifying to the owner than if all the world knew it was his own."

We thank Sir Walter for letting us know this.

"Guy Mannering" was written in the depths of winter. All the scenes in it occur in the winter

season, which gives it a semblance to truth. Scott, the great "lion," had several lion providers, among whom was one, Joseph Train by name, who communicated to him certain anecdotes, and the story of an astrologer which he had heard when a child, in the home of his grandfather, where he had drawn the first breath of mental life. This Scott worked up, in six weeks, into "Guy Mannering." The rapidity with which it was written is unparalleled in the annals of literary history. Lord Byron writing "The Corsair" in a fortnight is nothing to it. "Guy Mannering" is one of Scott's finest novels—in language simple, in style graceful, in thought chaste, in feeling kindly, in pathos deep, in humour quaint, in wit pungent, in scenery charming; while the characters are varied, striking, and portrayed to the life. We have the fascinating Julia Mannering, witty and high-spirited, loving the hero dearly, yet writing to her young lady friend:—"Oh, Matilda, it will never do; Mrs. Vambeest Brown—— The name has little to recommend it to be sure." We have the Dominie and his "Prodigious"; the tall, majestic Meg Merrilees, half man, half woman, with her incantations and her charms, her leathern jerkin, and her crab-tree cudgel; the homely Dandie, with his dogs Mustard and Pepper, and his pony Dumble; the sleek, cringing, treacherous Glossin—

that soul of an attorney ; the desperado Hatterick ; the keen, shrewd, sarcastic Playdill. These names are imperishable.

“Guy Mannering,” as far as reviews went, was not a success. It can hardly be said of it what Carlyle said in Jean Paul Richter’s case, “That the work fell stillborn from the Press ; not a dog of a reviewer lifted up his leg against it.” But with the almost solitary exception of the surly *Quarterly*, which, as usual, snarled and growled, “Guy Mannering” was unnoticed. *The Edinburgh* was silent, not from indifference ; to oppose the criticism of *The Quarterly* would be to praise Scott, so it remained neutral. In spite of this silence the public received “Guy Mannering,” as it had done “Waverley,” with unparalleled delight.

“The Antiquary” was given to the world in May, 1816. Its appearance was not welcomed with the same acclamation which had greeted his previous novels. Scott himself explains the reason why the public received it with such coldness. In a letter to Terry, Scott says :—“It wants the romance of ‘Waverley’ and the adventures of ‘Guy Mannering’ ; yet there is some salvation about it, for if a man will paint from Nature, he will be likely to amuse those who are daily looking at it.”

“The Antiquary” was Scott’s own favourite

novel. Nor need we wonder at the preference, for it bears the impress of the memories of his youth. Scott when a child used to wander with George Constable over the field where was the green grave of Balmawhapple, and by the seashore of Prestonpans, where the Mucklebuckets dried their nets and told weird stories of funerals and shipwrecked fishermen. As to the merits of the novel itself it is a simple narrative, charmingly told, of actual Scottish life as Scott himself had seen it, and although it never attains the high level of the historic "Waverley," or the unique "Guy Mannering," it contains sublime passages which Scott's previous and subsequent novels never reached.

What a brilliant description, for instance, is the storm scene. We have only space for a short quotation:—"The sun was now resting his huge disc upon the edge of the level ocean, and gilding the accumulation of towering clouds through which he had travelled the livelong day, and which now assembled on all sides, like misfortunes and disasters around a sinking empire and falling monarch. Still, however, his dying splendour gave a sombre magnificence to the massive congregation of vapours forming out of their unsubstantial gloom the show of pyramids and towers, some touched with gold, some with purple, some

with a hue of deep and dark red. The distant sea, stretched beneath this varied and gorgeous canopy, lay almost portentously still, reflecting back the dazzling and level beams of the descending luminary, and the splendid colouring of the clouds amidst which he was setting. Nearer to the beach the tide rippled onward in waves of sparkling silver that imperceptibly yet rapidly gained the sand." What a pity that this magnificent passage should be marred by the egregious blunder of making the sun set in the German Ocean.

Apart from the sublime description in the novel the characters are striking and admirably drawn. We have the incomparable Antiquary himself—ingenious, recondite, genial, whimsical—waited on by the gossiping Caxton to comb out his wig, and tyrannised over by his admiring womankind. We have Edie Ochiltree, the Gaberlunzie, a pawkie Scot, with the humour and the poetry of his race. We have the proud and fiery Captain Hector McIntyre, the Hotspur of the North, with a Highland pedigree as long as his claymore. We have that striking picture of the effects of feudal tyranny and fiendish pride—the unhappy Earl of Glenallan. We have the rogue Dousterswivel, or, as Edie persists in calling him, Dousterdevil; and, lastly, the sorely-afflicted fisherman, repairing the



“auld black bitch o’ a boat,” in which, as he said with tears, his fisher-boy had been lost. These are world-pictures drawn by a master-hand.

When “The Antiquary” appeared *The Edinburgh* was again silent, and seemed to ignore it. Again, as usual, *The Quarterly* was captious and snarling. What better could be expected from a journal which tried “to blast the reputation of Shelley, of Hazlitt, and of Lamb, which damned Wordsworth with faint praise, and ignored Coleridge entirely.”

In bidding adieu to “The Antiquary,” let us hope that from its perusal many a Jonathan Oldbuck in society has had his oddities checked, and many a rogue like Dousterswivel has discovered that the way of vice is not altogether strewn with roses.

The most powerful of all Scott’s novels, “Old Mortality,” was given to the world along with his weakest, “The Black Dwarf.” At the suggestion of the subtle and crafty John Ballantyne, a man of expediency who well knew how to play off one publisher against another, it was published by John Murray, in conjunction with his Edinburgh agent, Blackwood. Scott fancied that Ballantyne was of service to him in arranging terms with his publishers, who have the name of driving hard bargains with impecunious authors. “Barabbas,”

said Lord Byron, "was a publisher." Scott might say of Ballantyne what Johnson said of Miller, the celebrated London bookseller and publisher: "Sir, I like Miller, he has raised the price of literature." Still, as the sequel showed, it had been better for Scott to have left Ballantyne to his own resources and confided himself entirely to the honour of his publishers. In Scott's dark days of financial difficulty, John Murray, whom Byron called "the most timorous of all God's booksellers," did one of the noblest and most generous actions ever recorded of any publisher. Scott having desired Murray to sell his share of the copyright of "*Marmion*," he generously replied: "So highly do I estimate the honour of being even in so small a degree the publisher of the author of the poem, that no pecuniary consideration whatever can induce me to part with it. But there is a consideration of another kind which would make it painful to me if I were to retain it a minute longer. I mean the knowledge of its being required by the author, into whose hands it was spontaneously resigned in the same instant that I read his request."

Murray sent the manuscript of "*Old Mortality*" and "*The Black Dwarf*" to be read by Gifford, of the *Quarterly*, who suggested to Blackwood that the latter part of "*The Black Dwarf*" should be

altered. Blackwood not merely recommended this alteration to Scott, but proposed another way in which he thought the story should terminate.

Scott suspected the source from which this suggestion had originated. He was indignant, and wrote :—" Confound his impudence, tell him I belong to the Black Hussars of literature, who neither give nor take criticism." This from the meek and gentle Scott ! It was like the wrath of the lamb, "like sudden thunder from a summer sky." His critics were startled and confounded. Instantly the tales were published without further preliminary criticism or alteration. Gifford, however, was right. The "Dwarf" begins delightfully, but ends badly. "Old Mortality," on the other hand, instantly won a place in the foremost ranks of Scott's noblest works.

The subject of "Old Mortality" did not originate with Scott himself. It was suggested to him by Joseph Train. On one occasion in Scott's study, observing a portrait of Claverhouse, "Might he not," said Train, "be made in good hands the hero of a national romance as interesting as any about either Wallace or Prince Charlie?" "He might," said Scott, "but your Western Zealots would require to be faithfully portrayed in order to bring him out with the right effect." "And what," resumed Train, "if the story were

to be delivered as if from the mouth of Old Mortality? would he not do as well as the Minstrel did in the 'Lay'?" This is the history of the origin of "Old Mortality."

In London it was rapturously received. Lord Holland sat up all night to read it—"Nothing slept but his gout." The London publisher was unable to repress his exultation, and addressed to Scott himself a letter concluding with these words:—"Heber says there are only two men in the world, Walter Scott and Lord Byron. Between you, you have given existence to a third—Ever your faithful Servant, John Murray."

In Scotland, on the other hand, it was greeted with a terrific storm of opposition and disapprobation, because of its treatment of the Covenanters. McCrie, a Scotch Doctor in Divinity, and author of "The Life of Knox," directed the whirlwind and guided the storm which he had been instrumental in raising. Scott felt the tempest to be so great that he felt it necessary to defend himself in the *Quarterly*.

He was accused of selecting the subject and sitting down to write with the deliberate intention of insulting the Covenanters. This is a delusion. Scott selected the subject simply because of its historic interest and the opportunity it gave him of exercising his favourite powers. Following his

usual custom, he began "Old Mortality" with little definite plan or purpose. He used to say, "It was no use having a plot, you could not keep to it." Scott was not immaculate. He had his likings and his dislikings—was a good hater, had a good dash of Highland superstition and Jacobite prejudice. But that he sat down in malice to blacken the name and fame of any religious sect in Scotland—believe this who will, I for one cannot.

Scott caricatured Covenanting manners, but not the Covenanters themselves—like Burns, who caricatured Holy Willie and his prayers, but not the Church of Scotland. It was the excrescences of religion he hated—cant, rancour, bigotry, revenge, fanaticism, but not religion itself. Fanaticism is a subject on which wit and humour is apt to be carried too far. It must be confessed that Scott did exaggerate some of the characters in this novel. Such a being as Habakkuk Mucklewraith never lived. The exaggeration shown in the portraying of his character arose from unrestrained humour on Scott's part, not from bigotry or malice. Scott himself says: "I am not, God knows, a bigot in religious matters." These words were true.

Hazlitt, who was diametrically opposed to Scott's political opinions and Jacobite prejudices,

asserts this novel to be Scott's greatest work, and appeals, in confirmation of his criticism, to the "Covenanting McBriar, preaching at Drumlog, and to Bessie MacLure, that lonely form, like a figure in Scripture, sitting on the stone at the turning of the mountain to warn Burley that there is a lion in his path." The novel produced on Hazlitt's mind an impression most favourable to the Covenanters, and his judgment represents the unprejudiced opinion of the English and other nations. Indeed, the people of Scotland, in regard to "Old Mortality," were altogether biassed. They had such unbounded reverence and enthusiasm for the religious doings of their forefathers that they misjudged and misinterpreted Scott's meaning.

However much people may differ here, there can be no doubt or difference of opinion as to the graphic power with which Scott has portrayed the varied characters of the novel. We have Morton, the miserly auld laird of Milnwood, dying without an heir, enjoining his auld domestic, "Ailie," "to take care and haud the gear weel thigither, for the name of Morton of Milnwood's gane out like the last sough of an auld sang"; grumbling at the expense of his death-chamber being lighted by a mowlded candle, "which he ne'er cowl'd bide"; muttering with now unselfish care that "a dipped candle was gude enough to see to

dee wi'." We have the stern, inflexible, high-souled Burley, with the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other. We have the vain-glorious, haughty Bothwell, tracing back his lineage to the Scottish kings, yet mingling with the offscourings of his regiment—cruel and profligate, yet faithfully treasuring the faded love-letters of his departed Agnes, written a generation before. We have the wild fanatic Mucklewraith; the pompous Kettle-drumlie, "with no wit about him but his name"; the text-quoting, testifying Mause Headrigg and her cautious son Cuddy; lastly, we have the stately, courtly, accomplished Claverhouse himself—beautiful as a panther, smooth-looking, blood-spotted—with a heart cold and polished as the sword he wore.

"Rob Roy" appeared on New Year's Day, 1818, and received a brilliant reception. In the first flush of enthusiasm 10,000 copies went off, and 3,000 more were called for within a fortnight. Along with the last proof-sheet of MS. sent to Ballantyne, Scott added: "With great joy, I sent you Roy, 'Twas a tough job, But we're done with Rob." The writing of Rob had truly been a tough job for Scott, who throughout had suffered intense agony from acute cramp, followed by the lassitude of opium. One day James Ballantyne, calling on him for copy, found him sitting with a clean

pen and a blank sheet before him. Ballantyne expressed his surprise. "Ay, ay, Jemmy," said Scott, "it is easy for you to tell me to get on, but how the mischief can I make Rob Roy's wife speak with such a carmurning in my guts?"

The title of "Rob Roy" was given to the novel at the suggestion of Constable, the publisher, at a dinner party at Abbotsford. At first Scott was unwilling to accept the title. "What," he said to Constable, "Mr. Accoucheur, must you be setting up for Mr. Sponsor, too? But let's hear it." Constable said the name of the real hero would be the best possible name for the book. "Nay," answered Scott; "never let me have to write up to a name. You know I have generally adopted a title that told." The publisher, however, persevered, and after a time these scruples gave way. On rising from the dinner table, they sallied out to the lawn before the door, and all in the highest spirits enjoyed the fine May evening, John Ballantyne, familiarly called Mr. Puff, hopping up and down in his glee, exclaiming "Is Rob's gun here, Mr. Scott? Would you object to my trying the auld barrel with a *feu de joi*?" "Nay, Mr. Puff," said Scott, "it would burst and blow you to the devil before your time." "Jonnie, my man," said Con-



stable, "what the mischief puts drawing at first sight into your head?" A pertinent question! Alas! poor Jonnie was more accustomed to drawing "bills" than guns. Mr. Puff, says Lockhart, might well exult in the full and entire success of his trip to Abbotsford.

Scott made it a *sine quâ non* with Constable that Ballantyne should have a third share in the book-seller's moiety of the bargain, and though Jonnie had no more trouble about the publishing or settling of "Rob Roy" than his own Cobbler of Kelso, this stipulation secured him a bonus of £1,200 before two years had passed.

"Rob Roy" was dramatised in Edinburgh Theatre, and by King George's desire performed in his presence. The audience were enchanted with the King's hearty laughter at Bailie Nicol Jarvie's jokes, but particularly at his shout at Mattie's "Nane o' your Lunan tricks."

Some critics think the construction of the plot of "Rob Roy" is not happy, and the different materials not well adjusted; but all agree that in no novel has Scott so charmingly depicted Scottish scenery, and given such vivid glimpses of Scottish history. Take, for instance, the account given by Andrew Fairservice [the ideal Scottish serving-man of last century] concerning the rescue of Glasgow Cathedral at the time of the Reforma-

tion: "Ah, it's a brave kirk—nane o' yere whig-maleeries and curliewurlies and opensteek hems about it—a solid, weel-jointed mason-wark, that will stand as long as the warld. Keep hands and gunpowther aff it. It had amaist a douncome lang syne at the Reformation, when they pu'd doun the Kirks of St. Andrews and Perth, and thereawa', to cleanse them o' Papery, and idolatry, and image-worship, and surplices, and sic-like rags o' the muckle hure that sitteth on seven hills, as if ane wasna braid eneugh for her auld hinder end. Sae the commons o' Renfrew, and o' the Barony, and the Gorbals, and a' about, they behoved to come into Glasgow ae fair morning, to try their hand on purgying the High Kirk o' Popish nicknackets. But the tounsmen o' Glasgow, they were feared their auld edifice might slip the girths in gaun through siccan rough physic, sae they rang the common bell, and assembled the train-bands wi' took o' drum. By good luck, the worthy James Rabat was Dean o' Guild that year (and gude mason he was himsell, made him the keener to keep up the auld bigging), and the trades assembled, and offered downright battle to the commons, rather than their kirk showld coup the crans, as others had done elsewhere. It wasna for luve o' Paperie—na, na! nane cowld ever say that o' the trades o' Glasgow—sae they sune came

to an agreement to take a' the idolatrous statues of sants (sorrow be on them!) out o' their neuks. And sae the bits o' stane idols were broken in pieces by Scripture warrant, and flung into the Molendinar burn, and the auld kirk stood as crouse as a cat when the flaes are kaimed aff her, and a'body was alike pleased. And I hae heard wise folk say, that if the same had been done in ilka kirk in Scotland, the Reform wad just have been as pure as it is e'en now, and we wad hae mair Christian-like kirks, for I hae been sae lang in England, that naething will drived out o' my head, that the dog-kennel at Osbaldistone Hall is better than mony a house o' God in Scotland."

John Ruskin calls this "a piece of Scottish history of quite inestimable and concentrated value."

Nor has Scott in any of his other novels given with greater power the individual portraiture of character. We have Rob Roy himself, his foot on his native heath, and his name McGregor; the Glasgowiegian, that epitome of auld farrant wit, Bailie Nicol Jarvie; the sprightly dashing Diana Vernon in her picturesque riding habit; the hard-hunting, hard-drinking knight of Osbaldistone Hall, swearing by Church and King; his son Rashleigh, the very soul of Jesuitism, a subtle, relentless, and unscrupulous

villain, who is at the bottom of all the mischief that happens in "Rob Roy"; and last, but not least, we have the inimitable Dougal Cratur.

"The Heart of Midlothian" was published in June, 1818, and received with unbounded enthusiasm. Walter Savage Landor, who declared that in the whole of Scott's poetry there is only one good line, that, namely, referring to the dog of the lost man, "When the wind waved his garments," &c., says of this novel that, if Scott had written nothing else, it would have stamped him the most illustrious author of the age. Its charm and power lie in the pathetic interest of the story, a story which is said to have been imitated by the authoress of "Adam Bede." The simplicity and sensitivity of Jeanie Deans rise into sublime heroism, and the glimpses which we incidentally get of a certain phase of her character are charming. Shrewd even in its simple tenderness is her counsel to Butler regarding her afflicted father: "And dinna ye say muckle to him, but set him on speaking himsel', for he'll bring himsel' mair comfort that way."

"Had the story," says Lady Louisa Stuart, "been conducted by a common hand, Effie would have attracted our concern and sympathy, Jeanie only cold approbation. Whereas Jeanie, without youth, beauty, genius, warm passions, or any other

novel perfection, is here our object from beginning to end. This is enlisting the affections in the cause of virtue."

"This group of novels," says Mr. Ruskin, "is distinguished by characters of strength and felicity which never more appeared after Scott was struck down by his terrific illness in 1819. It includes 'Waverley,' 'Guy Mannering,' 'The Antiquary,' 'Rob Roy,' 'Old Mortality,' and 'The Heart of Midlothian.' The composition of these occupied the mornings of his happiest days, between the ages of forty-three and forty-eight."

An able critic, the late Walter Bagehot, says:—"Jeanie Deans is probably the best of Scott's heroines, and she is so because she is the least of a heroine. The plain, matter-of-fact element in the peasant girl's life and circumstances suited a robust imagination. There is little in this part of her character that is very finely described which is characteristically feminine; she is not a masculine, but she is an epicene heroine." This criticism is just and true.

The principal characters in this novel are admirably portrayed, and challenge comparison with those in Scott's proudest works. We have Jeanie herself, the typical Scottish lassie, homely yet heroic, with her quaint self-possession and unswerving loyalty to truth. We have that rigid

Puritan her father, Douce Davie Deans, keeping the straight path, avoiding right-hand snares and left-hand way-slidings. We have the sheepish Dumiedykes; the worthy Bartoline, neglecting his saddlery in his love for Scottish law; and, lastly, we have the mad woman, Madge Wildfire, with her finery and her frenzy, and her heartrending bursts of pathos, whom Coleridge pronounces the most original of all Scott's characters.

Part of this novel, however, is carelessly composed. Rosneath is called an island again and again, and the incident of the father falling by the hand of his illegitimate son is unpleasant.

Lockhart fixes the publication of this novel as the climax of Scott's career. I am not so sure of that. No doubt at this time he was realising from his writings £10,000 a-year, but his expenditure was in proportion and compelled him to keep constantly at work. At the same time, though he had unbounded applause both as a man and as a poet, his constitution had received a great shock and his health was miserable. I should prefer to fix the best and most joyful period of his life a little later, when his health had been re-established, when "Ivanhoe" had been written, when King George had been welcomed to Scotland, and the baronetcy accepted.

The fine old English romance of "Ivanhoe"

appeared in December, 1819. Scott was then in the gloom of solitude, under a deep cloud of affliction. In this month, within ten days, an uncle, an aunt, and his beloved mother died. On his mother's death he says to Lady Louisa Stuart, who knew her well and loved her much :—" If I have been able to do anything in the way of painting the past times, it is very much from the studies with which she presented me. You cannot conceive how affecting it was to me to see the little preparations of presents which she had assorted for the New Year, and to think that the kind heart is cold, which delighted in all these acts of kindly affections." To crown all, Scott's own life at this period was hanging by a slender thread.

Were I to describe the rapture with which "Ivanhoe" was received in the world of letters, I would be accused of exaggeration. Enough to say that in England it was welcomed as a national triumph. As Johnson said of Gray's odes :—" Criticism was lost in wonder."

It appeared to the *literati* as a new world of creation in the realm of literature, of which for a moment they were incapable of forming a correct estimate.

Rebecca, the charming Jewess, and her father were suggested to Scott by his friend Skene, to

whom he wrote after the publication of "Ivanhoe":—"You will find this book owes not a little to your German reminiscences." The interesting and amusing chapter in which are given our Saxon terms for animals in the field, and our Norman equivalents when they are dressed and appear on the table, was suggested to Scott by his advocate friend Mr. William Clerk, an accomplished philologist.

"Ivanhoe," as a work of art, takes precedence of all Scott's efforts, whether in prose or verse, but as a work of genius it cannot for an instant be compared to his first three novels.

It has been truly said that "Ivanhoe" introduces us into a world almost as distinctly new as that of the "Tempest," full of characters of which there are no real historical types. We have the Templar—fierce and licentious, with his frowning brow and inflexible haughtiness of disposition; the beautiful Jewess, pure and exalted, combining the grandeur of Deborah, the tenderness of Rachel, and the loveliness of the Shulamite—Solomon's spouse; her father, the old Hebrew, cringing and avaricious, with the keenness and cunning of his race; the gallant Richard; the bold outlaw, Robin Hood, and his chaplain, the jolly Clerk of Copmanhurst; the honest Cedric; Wamba the jester, and the swine-herd, Gurth. Scott



manages these characters with the power of a wizard.

Sir Walter Scott, when in Paris in 1826, went one evening to the "Odéon," and found the play to be "Ivanhoe." The story was sadly mangled. The words were nonsense. "Yet it was strange," he says, "to hear anything like the words, which I then in agony of pain dictated to William Laidlaw at Abbotsford, now recited in a foreign tongue, and for the amusement of a strange people. I little thought to have survived the completing of this novel."

"Ivanhoe" is the first of Scott's novels that we read and the last that we can forget. Nevertheless, our dear "Ivanhoe," the romance of our childhood—so we are told on high authority—is crumbling away as fast as the plaster of Paris on the walls of Abbotsford—is on the high road to ruin like one of Sir Joshua's carelessly-painted pictures.

"The Abbot."—It is positively a relief, if not a pleasure, to be able to say, after such laudation of these romances, that the novels which followed the publication of "Ivanhoe" were not welcomed with the same enthusiasm of delight. The sale perceptibly declined, though the publishers and the Ballantynes, for reasons of their own, kept Scott—I shall not say cruelly, but I

shall say unkindly—in profound ignorance of the fact. Had Scott known the truth he might have laid aside his pen, and the colossal publishing house would have fallen a few years earlier, and have kept him from the insane Abbotsford craze, “that romance in stone and lime,” his pride and his ruin.

Scott himself thought well of “The Abbot” when he had finished it, and wrote to Lockhart regarding it with glee. It never reached the immense sale of “Ivanhoe”; yet, had the same circulation been accorded to the work of any other author except Scott, it would have been pronounced, in the publisher’s phraseology, a splendid success. “The Abbot” was suggested to Scott when on a visit to Blair-Adam, where also he visited Castle-Campbel, which now belongs to a friend of my own.

“The Abbot” appeared in September, 1820. The nation at this time was deeply agitated by the cruel proceedings of King George against his Queen. Knowing that Scott had espoused the side of the King in that wretched business, and remembering that he had at one time declined to write the life of Queen Mary because he believed in her guilt with Darnley, it was thought by many that the romance had a distinct reference to the times. The surmise had no foundation in fact.

Constable was not satisfied with the title of "The Abbot," and suggested "The Nunnery" instead. Scott, however, stuck to his "Abbot." "Constable grumbled," says Lockhart, "but was soothed by the author's reception of his request that Queen Elizabeth might be brought into the field in his next romance as a companion to the Mary Stuart of "The Abbot." He also indulged Constable so far as to accept the title of "Kenilworth" for that romance. John Ballantyne objected to this title, and told Constable that the result would be something worthy of the kennel. John was mistaken, and Constable had every reason to be satisfied with the result. His partner says, "His vanity boiled over so much at this time, on hearing that his suggestion was accepted, that when in his moods he used to stalk up and down his room and exclaim, "By God, I am all but the author of the Waverley Novels." Poor Constable!

As to the merits of "The Abbot," portions of it are somewhat tedious and wearisome; but the greater part, for descriptive scenery and romantic interest, is equal to the best of Scott's historical romances. The characters portrayed are admirable. We have the lovely and unfortunate Mary, the roving Ronald, the sprightly Catherine Seaton and her scampish brother; the rigid, conscientious Lady

of Lochleven; her Senechal Dryfesdale, the gloomy fatalist; George of Douglas, with his deep voice and melancholy mien; the genial falconer, Adam Woodcock, and "Haggard Lindsay's iron eye."

Carlyle observes that Scott's painting of character is from the skin inwards, not, like Shakespeare's and Goethe's, from the heart outwards. If Carlyle means by this that Scott is incapable of portraying human character in a genuine manner he is surely mistaken. Carlyle, however, probably meant that Scott could not portray the deeper and more subtle traits of character—could not, for instance, create a Hamlet, a Mignon, or a Mephistopheles. In this Carlyle is right. Scott requires a bold type of character, which can be readily grasped by the common mind. With kings, queens, beggars, and gipsies he is at home. Mary and Elizabeth, Louis XI. and James VI., Edie Ochiltree and Meg Merrilees, are painted to the life. "Fenella" again is a complete failure. As an example of Scott's power of painting the deeper human passions take that scene in "The Abbot," where Mary's frenzied remorse for the murder of her husband Darnley is so admirably described. Surely that is not from the skin inwards, but from the heart outwards!

It is difficult to tear oneself away from the

fascinating study of the Waverley romances, but time and space forbid further illustration and elucidation. In conclusion I shall, without comment, glance at a few of the principal characters which form a portrait gallery for all time.

In "The Bride of Lammermoor" we have the sombre Master of Ravenswood, the last of his race, with his fitting glimpse of love and happiness, soon to be changed into the horror of utter despair; we have the faithful Caleb with his testy remonstrance, "Haud ye'r tongue, for heaven's sake, sir; if it's my pleasure to hazard my soul in telling lees for the honour of the family it's nae business of yours"; we have the gentle Lucy Ashton; the frank, jovial Bucklaw, and his blustering, bullying parasite, Captain Craigenfelt.

In "Kenilworth" we have the regal Elizabeth, every inch a queen, but not altogether unsusceptible to the gentler passions; the courtly Leicester; Mine Host of the Black Bear, the genial, gossiping Giles Gosling; that incomparable trio of villains, the roystering Lambourne, the miserly Foster, and the universal villain Varney.

In "The Fortunes of Nigel" we have the scholarly King James, shambling, slobbering, faint-hearted, good-natured; his overgrown favourite, the splendid and imperious Buckingham;

the worthy Master George Herriot ("Jingling Geordie"); David Ramsay, the abstruse and absent-minded clockmaker; the conceited, consequential, pragmatic Richard Moniplies; the sarcastic, backbiting, croaking Sir Mungo Malagrowth, of Girnigo Castle; the old Jew Trapbois, with his "consideration"; and that seasoned cask, Duke Hildebrod.

In "Quentin Durward" we have the hero Quentin, young, handsome, and dashing, the freshest and most life-like of Scott's many heroes; the profound, crafty Louis, with his strange mixture of great intellect and weak-minded superstition; his rival, the bull-headed, frank, and generous Burgandy; the inimitable finishers of the law, linked together for all time, the grave and pathetic Trois-Eschelles and the frisky, comic, alert Petit Andre; Lord Crawford, the bravest of the brave, with his scarred and weather-beaten countenance that had looked upon death as play-fellow in thirty pitched battles; and the wild and weird Bohemian, without name, without country, without God.

In "St. Ronan's Well" we have Touchwood, the voluble, far-travelled, self-sufficient, intermeddling old Nabob; that worthy termagant, Meg Dodds, with her brindled locks, skinny hands, and voice that could match a choir of fisherwomen;

Meiklewham, the large-boned, loud-voiced, red-faced, unscrupulous attorney ; the curate, Mr. Simon Chatterly, the verse-making, namby-pamby Squire of Dames ; that modern Æsculapius, Dr. Quackleben, the not too disinterested suitor of Widow Blower, large in purse and person, with her numerous perversions of the Doctor's unpronounceable name ; and the pacific Captain Mungo McTurk, with his emphatic "By Cot !" and his short red nose, snuffing Glenlivet and gunpowder in every wind.

What a list of immortals ! What a world in miniature !

"What, then," asks Carlyle, "is the result of these Waverley romances ? Are they to amuse one generation only ? One or more—as many generations as they can, but not all generations !" I am no prophet. Whether Carlyle's prediction will be fulfilled I cannot tell. Meantime this is our consolation—that these Waverley romances have already given amusement and instruction to three generations. The next can look after itself.

## THE LAIRD.

THE dream of Scott's life was to be a laird, and to live in a style that became the descendant of an ancient border chief.

Sir Walter used to relate that, when travelling in boyhood with his father from Selkirk to Melrose, the old man desired the carriage to halt at the foot of an eminence, and said, "We must get out here, Walter, and see a thing quite in your line." This was the scene of the last great clan battle of the borders, fought between the Kerrs and Buccleuch for the possession of King James the Fifth, the young Prince himself being a spectator of the contest.

Near that scene Walter was one day to raise Abbotsford, his pride and his ruin. As the name implies, the land and adjacent ford in ancient times belonged to the Abbots of Melrose.

Abbotsford was the first, and probably may be the last, great estate won by the pen of an author. Carlyle sneers at Scott writing novels to buy land and upholstery. I would no more blame Scott for that than I would Shakespeare for writing plays



for the Globe Theatre to get money to purchase a comfortable house at Stratford-on-Avon. But I do blame Scott for holding in light esteem the craft of authorship, through which he became Sir Walter Scott of Abbotsford.

Scott was now a lord of acres—a Scottish laird. To his brother-in-law he writes: “I have bought a property extending along the banks of the river Tweed, and I assure you that we are not a little proud of being greeted as Laird and Lady of Abbotsford. We will give a grand gala when we take possession of it, and as we are very clannish here in this corner, all the Scotts in the country, from the duke to the peasant, shall dance on the green to the bagpipes and drink whisky punch.”

At one of Scott's first visits to Abbotsford, he was accompanied by a neighbouring laird, a shrewd, practical friend, who noticed the extreme sterility of the soil, and remarked that it would yield no returns by cropping. “Cropping, indeed!” answered Scott, to whom the idea of profit was second to that of beauty; “you take it for granted, then, that I came here with the intention of growing rich as a gentleman farmer. No, truly, I leave the scientific manufacture to Dr. Coventry and Lord Meadowbank. But the main question is what sort of crops you wish to raise. I should, in the first

place, think of rearing plenty of wood for ornament and shelter, and we must live as the knights did in the olden times, only without so much fighting. Depend on it we shall grow enough of oats and wheat to feed ourselves and horses. Fish and game we shall have in abundance; and if sheep and kine should be wanting, which is not likely, we must make a raid into Traquair, and drive away from your rich pasture as much of the stock as we think needful."

After his joke he went on delighting his imagination: "Here, if I should ever become rich, is the spot whereon I should build my castle. In that level ground to the left I would have my garden, and there should be a sweeping carriage drive down the slope, opening from that cart-road hillside. The ground is poor, you say; but it is very good for the growth of wood. I would plant a large plantation of mountain ash, Scotch fir, and larch, for the sake of their rapid growth, near the castle; but on the hills I would prefer oak, birch, hazel, and other trees of which the bark is suitable for the tanner; so that every fifteen or twenty years those who came after me might have a profitable fall of copse-wood."

This romance in castle-building and tree-planting was afterwards amply and accurately realised. Scott had a profound pleasure in tree-

planting, and had he not been able to add by purchase the neighbouring hills to his original lands, "I believe," says a friend, "he would have requested permission of the owners to plant the grounds, for the mere pleasure of the occupation, to beautify the landscape." He trenched the ground in which his trees were set, coaxed, weeded, and watched them until, with great glee, in 1815 (having begun in 1811) he said, "I am not just arrived at the point of saying that I can walk under the shade of my own trees; but I could lie under their shade, at all events, and this is something."

To Lady Abercorn he writes (November 29, 1816): "I saunter about from nine in the morning till five at night with a plaid about my shoulders and an immense bloodhound at my heels, and stick in sprigs which are to become trees when I shall have no eyes to look at them. Somebody will look at them, however, though I question that they will have the same pleasure in gazing on the full-grown oaks that I have had in nursing the saplings."

Scott had a painter's as well as a poet's eye for scenery; indeed, he compared a planter to a painter for the exquisite delight afforded by such employment. "The planter," he said, "is like a painter laying on his colours—at every moment he

sees the effects coming out. There is no art or occupation comparable to this ; it is full of past, present, and future enjoyment.”

When the Laird was in Edinburgh attending to his official duties, he sighed for Abbotsford, and took the liveliest interest in all that was going on there. He writes to the land steward : “ George must stick in a few wild roses, honeysuckles, and sweetbriars in suitable places so as to produce the luxuriance we see in the woods, which nature plants herself. Get out of your ideas about expense ; it is, after all, but throwing away the price of planting. If I were to buy a picture worth £500 nobody would wonder much. Now, if I chose to let out £100 or £200 to make a landscape of my estate, and add so much more to its value, I certainly don’t do a more foolish thing.”

It is pleasant to see from the Laidlaw MSS. with what alacrity and zeal Scott’s noble friends helped him with kind contributions. The Duke of Buccleuch sent bushels of acorns ; the Earl of Fife presented seed of Norway pines ; a box of fine chestnuts came from Lisbon—the box was sent on from Edinburgh to Abbotsford unopened—and before the factor heard of them they were peeled and rendered useless for planting. “ Confound the chestnuts and those who peeled them,” ex-

claimed Scott, "the officious blockheads did it by way of special favour." Scott told his friend Morritt that he never was so happy in his life as in having a place of his own to create. He was perpetually buying land from the needy, greedy, neighbouring proprietors to add to his original purchase. "It rounds off the property so handsomely," he says in one of his letters. There was always a corner to "round off." For these neighbouring lands he paid far beyond their market value. On one occasion, when a friend remarked that for a certain tract he had paid an exorbitant price, Scott replied good-naturedly, with a shrug of the shoulders, "Well, well, it only is to me the scribbling of another volume more of nonsense."

Abbotsford meanwhile from a rustic cottage in the wizard's hands grew into a fairy palace. The furniture and decorations were of the most gorgeous and princely description, the wainscots of oak and cedar, the floors tessellated with marbles or woods of different dyes, the ceilings fretted and carved with the delicate tracery of a Gothic abbey, the storied windows blazoned with the rich-coloured insignia of heraldry, and the walls garnished with time-honoured trophies, while scattered through the mansion were rare specimens of art and sumptuously-bound books, gifts from King George and other friends. His

antiquarian tastes were visible everywhere. Except his wife's boudoir every room was a museum. Over one mantelpiece hung the sword of the great Montrose, on another lay the pistols of Prince Charlie. Nor was religion or sport forgotten. The beautiful marble-heads of nuns and confessors, and antlered heads of noble stags adorned the hall, while Maida, the famous stag-hound, kept sentinel over the Omnium Gatherum. Such was Abbotsford, which of all the creations of his genius will probably be the first to perish.

It was in the spring of 1812 that Scott, with his family, removed from Ashiestill to Abbotsford. That day was a sad one to the villagers, by whom Scott and his lady were greatly beloved. The Sherra's larder, cellar, medicine-chest, and purse were ever at the service of the poor and the sick. The parting scene was a touching one.

It also had its comic features, for in a letter to Lady Alvanley, the widow of the celebrated Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, Scott humorously describes the flitting: "The neighbours here have been much delighted with the procession of my furniture, in which old swords, bows, targets, and lances made a very conspicuous show. A family of turkeys were accommodated within the helmet of some *preux* chevalier of ancient border fame; and

the very cows, for aught I know, were bearing banners and muskets. I assure your ladyship that this caravan, attended by a dozen of ragged, rosy peasant children carrying fishing-rods and spears, and leading ponies, greyhounds, and spaniels, would, as it crossed the Tweed, have furnished no bad subject for the pencil, and really reminded me of one of the gipsy groups of Callot upon their march."

As Laird of Abbotsford Scott has now realised the dream of his boyhood. He was not only a laird, but a sort of mediæval chieftain. The few acres had become an estate, the rustic cottage an embattled mansion, the bare hills were clothed with young plantations, while well-kept gardens and graceful terraces stretched to the margin of the silvery Tweed.

Some of the people in the neighbourhood of Abbotsford shook their heads, and an adjacent proprietor, whose property was envied, told Sir Walter that he "wouldna be surprised if he lived to see the craws biggin in the braw lum-heads."

At Abbotsford Scott's habits were simple and rustic. He did not sit late into the night, but rose at five, lit his own fire, shaved and dressed with neatness and deliberation. He hated, says Lockhart, slovenliness and the bedgown and slipper tricks so commonly indulged in by men

of letters. Attired in his green shooting jacket, or whatever dress he meant to wear till dinner time, he was seated at his desk by six o'clock, all his papers ranged before him in the most accurate order, and his books of reference marshalled round him on the floor. At nine, when the family assembled for breakfast, he would enter the room rubbing his hands with glee, for, as he said himself, "he had done enough to break the neck of the day's work." After breakfast, the guests could betake themselves to fishing, shooting, riding or driving, while a retinue of keepers and grooms was in attendance upon them. Meanwhile Scott retired for a couple of hours more to his literary work and correspondence, it being an inflexible rule with him to answer all letters that required answering the day they were received.

At noon he was, as he used to say, "his own man." When the day was wet and stormy, he retired to his study and did double work, so that he might have a reserve fund from which to draw when the weather was bright and sunny. He was thus enabled now and again to place himself at the disposal of his guests for an entire day.

While dispensing all the hospitalities of a great feudal proprietor, Scott was not forgetful of his own family. The simplicity and amiability of his



life were seen to advantage, in his unbended and familiar intervals, with his children. He was more their associate than sire, a companion called "Papa." He would ramble with them through the woods, tumble with them on the lawn, fondle them on his knee, tuck them in his Highland plaid and play bo-peep with them, all the while insinuating instruction into their young minds, until they were ripe for systematic teaching. He was himself their instructor. He taught them by oral tradition more than through books. On week-days he told them historical narratives, and on Sundays narratives from the Scriptures. He did not send his daughters to boarding schools to be *finished*, a word with a double meaning. He had a private governess for them, selected more for moral worth than flashy attainments. He insisted that they should be taught Scottish music and song, which he himself loved with his whole soul. The boys, when old enough, went to a public school, as he himself had done. From thence the elder was sent to a military school before joining the army, and the younger to Oxford, where he took a degree before entering the Foreign Office.

The laird also took the deepest interest in his domestics, retainers, and pensioners. Scott seemed to think with Swift that "an affectionate and

faithful servant should always be considered in the character of an humble friend." "Sir Walter speaks to us," said one, an old retainer, "as if we were blood relations." His chief servant was Tom Purdie, whom he found a poacher, and made a bailiff. When he died Sir Walter mourned for him as for a brother.

Another characteristic of the laird was the rare faculty of blending all sorts and conditions of men with multifarious tastes into one group, and contriving to make them feel happy with themselves and with each other. A striking illustration of this phase of his character is given us by Lockhart. The extract is a long one, but it affords such a vivid insight into the daily life of Abbotsford, and presents such a pleasing picture of Scott, the ideal laird, himself, that I cannot forbear giving it almost in full. "It was a bright September morning," says Lockhart, "with a sharpness in the air that doubled the animating influence of the sunshine, and all was in readiness for a great coursing match on Newark Hill. The only other guest who had chalked out other sport for himself was the staunchest of anglers, but he, too, was there on the shelty, armed with his salmon-rod and landing-net, and attended by his humorous squire, Charlie Purdie, a celebrated fisherman.

“ Sir Walter, mounted on Sybill, was marshalling the order of procession with a large hunt whip, and, among a dozen frolicsome youths and maidens, who seemed disposed to laugh at all discipline, appeared on horseback, each as eager as the youngest sportsman in the troop, Sir Humphry Davy, Dr. Wellaston, and the patriarch of Scottish belles lettres, Henry Mackenzie. ‘The Man of Feeling,’ however, was persuaded with some difficulty to resign his steed for the present to his faithful negro follower, and to join Lady Scott in the sociable, until we should reach the ground of our battue. Laidlaw, on a long-tailed, wiry Highlander, which carried him nimbly and stoutly, although his feet almost touched the ground as he sat, was adjutant. But the most picturesque figure was the illustrious inventor of the safety lamp. He had come for his favourite sport of angling, and was not prepared for coursing fields. He had left Charlie Purdie’s troop on a sudden thought, and his fisherman’s costume, a brown hat with flexible brim, surrounded with line upon line, and innumerable fly-hooks, jack-boots worthy of a Dutch smuggler, and a fustian surtout dabbled with the blood of salmon, made a fine contrast with the smart jackets, white cord breeches, and well-polished jockey boots of the less distinguished cavaliers about him. Dr.

Wellaston was in black, and, with his noble, serene dignity of countenance, might have passed for a sporting archbishop. Mackenzie, at this time in the seventy-sixth year of his age, with a white hat turned up with green, green spectacles, green jacket, and long brown leather gaiters buttoned upon his nether anatomy, wore a dog whistle round his neck, and had over all the air of as resolute a devotee as the Grey Captain, of Huntly Burn. Tom Purdie and his subalterns had proceeded, by a few hours, with all the greyhounds that could be collected at Abbotsford and Melrose, but the giant Maida had remained as his master's orderly, and now gambolled about Sibyl Grey, barking for mere joy like a spaniel puppy.

“The order of march had been all settled, and the sociable was just getting under weigh, when the ‘Lady Anne’ broke out from the line screaming with laughter, and exclaimed, ‘Papa, papa, I knew you would never think of going without your pet.’ Scott looked round, and I rather think there was a blush as well as a smile upon his face when he perceived a little black pig frisking about his pony, and evidently a self-elected addition to the party of the day. He tried to look stern and cracked his whip at the creature, but was in a moment obliged to join in the general cheers. Poor piggy soon found

a strap round its neck, and was dragged into the background. Scott, watching the retreat, repeated with much pathos the first verse of an old pastoral song :

‘ What will I do gin my hoggie die ?  
My joy, my pride, my hoggie ;  
My only beast—I had nae mae ;  
And wow—but I was vogie.’

The cheers were redoubled, and the cavalcade moved on.”

Well might Lockhart say to William Allan as the procession was about to start from Abbotsford house, “A faithful sketch of what you at this moment see would be more interesting a hundred years hence than the grandest so-called historical picture that you will ever exhibit in Somerset House,” and the painter might well grant that he was right.

Time will not permit us to follow the party to the field—enough to say there were gulfs to be avoided, bogs to be treaded, and many a bold rider measured his length among the peat hags. Sibyl Grey stumbled and threw Sir Walter into a ditch, and Sir Humphry’s horse plunged with its rider into a treacherous morass, which, till they were foundered in it, had borne all the appearance of a delicate green turf. It must have been amusing to have seen Sir

Humphry emerge from his involuntary mud-bath, his habiliments garnished with mud, slime, and mangled watercresses, and to hear him exclaim, "Good heavens, is it thus that I visit the classic scenery of 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel'?" The scene that day from first to last was worthy of the combined pencil of a Hogarth, a Wilkie, and a Landseer.

Another hunt called Abbotsford Hunt came later in the season, the 28th of October, being the birthday of Sir Walter's eldest son, which also required a good deal of management and tact on the part of the Laird. It included as many of the young gentry as pleased to attend, with a few yeomen and farmers, special favourites of Sir Walter. Lockhart has given a long and graphic account of the Hunt dinner, the names of the principal guests, with their songs and toasts, &c. A brief *summary* must suffice for quotation. "After the hunt the whole company dined at Abbotsford, the Sheriff in the chair. The chaplain, an eager partaker in the preliminary sport, said grace, beginning with thanks to the Almighty, who had given man dominion over the fowls of the air, and over the beasts of the field, &c. Scott had been fumbling with his spoon long before he reached Amen, and exclaimed, as he sat down, 'Well done, Chaplain, I think we've had every-

thing but the "view holla." The feasts generally consisted of a baron of beef at the foot of the table, a salted round at the head, while tureens of hare soup and hotch-potch extended down the centre, and such light articles as geese, turkeys, a sucking-pig, a singed sheep's head, and the inevitable haggis were placed as side-dishes. Black-cock and moor-fowl, snipe, black and white puddings, and mountains of pancakes formed the second course. Ale was the general beverage during dinner, but there was abundance of port and sherry for those who preferred it. The quaighs of Glenlivet were tossed off as if they held water. The wine decanters made a few rounds of the table, but the hints for hot punch soon became clamorous, and then the business of the evening commenced in earnest. Songs, toasts, and sentiments were the order of the evening, intermingled with the Laird's stories. And so it proceeded until it was voted that the hour had come for '*doch an dorrach*,' the stirrup cup, a bumper all round, of the unmitigated mountain dew. How they contrived to reach home in perfect safety is still a mystery."

The Abbotsford Hunt and its dinner were eagerly anticipated and fondly remembered by many. One comely goodwife far off among the

hills amused Sir Walter by telling him, the next time he passed her homestead after one of these jolly dinners, what her husband's first words were when he alighted at his own door. "Allie, my woman, I'm ready for my bed, and oh, lass, I wish I could sleep for a twalmonth, for there's only ae thing in the world worth living for, and that's the Abbotsford Hunt."

The Laird was equally considerate in the matter of dwellings for the small tenants and labourers. He realised that he had charge of a district over which it was his duty to diffuse civility and happiness, comfort and security. He did not wish to have his tenants and labourers mere ephemera—mere beings of a day. His desire was that they should have, like the aged minstrel at Newark Tower,

A little garden hedged with green,  
A cheerful hearth and lattice clean.

When times were hard and winter severe, he thought of the firesides of the labourers. To his factor he writes, from Edinburgh, "If you can devise any mode by which hands can be beneficially employed at Abbotsford, I could turn £50 or £100 extra into service. If it made the poor and industrious people a little easier I should have more pleasure in it than any money I ever spent in my life." Again he writes: "I think of my rooks amongst this snow storm, also of the birds,



and not a little of the poor. For benefit of the former I hope Peggy throws out the crumbs, and a corn sheaf or two for the game, if placed where poachers could not come at them. For the poor people I wish you to distribute five pounds or so among the neighbouring poor who may be in distress, and see that our own folks are tolerably well off." From these sentences the kindly, loving nature of the Laird peeps out. Kindness of heart was the reigning quality of Scott's character.

Nor was the Laird forgetful to celebrate the ancient ceremony of Harvest Home.

At the end of autumn, before proceeding to Edinburgh, it was Scott's delight to gather his tenantry, servants, retainers, and their friends under his roof-tree at Abbotsford to hold "Harvest Home." Sir Walter and Lady Scott with their family were present during the first part of the evening to dispense the good things. The reception which they received on such occasions would have touched the heart of a misanthrope. The Highland dances went on to the music of the bagpipes of John of Skye almost from sunset to sunrise. The Laird himself, mixing in the merry groups, had his private joke for every old wife or gausie carle, his arch compliments for the ear of every bonny lass, his hand and his blessing for every little "Eppie Daidle."

But of all the ancient ceremonies of olden times none gave him greater delight than "Hogmanay." On the morning of that day he received a visit from all the children of his estate, when

"The cottage bairns sang blythe and gay  
At the ha' door for hogmanay."

Nothing touched the heart of Sir Walter more than the gratitude of the children as he doled out to them with his *own hands* the hogmanay cakes and silver pennies.

What a noble example to the Scottish lairds not to spend their rents in Paris or London, but to live in their own houses, to be the patron of their own tenantry and the fathers of their own children!

The splendid hospitality which the Laird of Abbotsford dispensed during the height of his fame and fortune could only be excelled by noblemen of the first rank. His dinner table was thoroughly catholic. Thither came Prince Leopold, afterwards King of Belgium, the Duke of Buccleuch, Washington Irving, Lord Melville, Lady Byron, Lord Jeffrey, Lord Cockburn, Sir Humphry Davy, Sir Adam Ferguson, Tom Moore, and the Ettrick Shepherd. Others of less note now were there, although then thought men of mark and standing. Such were his old friends, Constable and the Ballantynes, William Erskine, William Clerk, of Eldin, Mackenzie, "the Man of

Feeling," and George Cranstoun, afterwards Lord Corehouse, the humourists Charles Matthews and Daniel Terry, with a host of others too numerous to mention. Men of rank, men of letters, men of science were seldom absent from his dinner table. Lady Scott used to say that Abbotsford was a hotel in everything but the name. "Lady Anne," counted on one occasion nineteen ladies' maids staying at Abbotsford. No sooner did one set of guests vacate the rooms than they were reoccupied by another troop of the same description. About a third of the House of Lords at one time or another had paid a visit to the Laird of Abbotsford; the most of these were intimate friends, boon companions of Sir Walter, with whom he stood on no ceremony, who could entertain themselves and one another.

The author of "Waverley," however, had another circle, an infinitely larger one, pilgrims of every clime, who came to worship at his shrine. Lockhart counted in one day sixteen different parties at Abbotsford, all uninvited. These Abbotsford pilgrims, as a rule, came armed with letters of introduction from friends, for whose sake Scott received them cordially, and treated them hospitably. As these strangers had never seen Scott's face before, and probably would never hear his voice again, we can imagine with what

rapture they listened to his fascinating talk as he tried to entertain them.

Another set of pilgrims came to Abbotsford, armed, not with letters of introduction, but with note and sketch books, and sometimes, in the absence of Sir Walter, proved irksome visitors to Lady Scott, and the womenkind. "One day, on returning to Abbotsford," says Lockhart, "we found Lady Scott and her daughters doing penance under the merciless curiosity of a couple of tourists, who had arrived from Selkirk soon after we set out for Melrose. They were rich specimens of Americans, both of them rigged out in new jackets and trousers of the Macgregor tartan, the one a lawyer and the other a Unitarian preacher. Mrs. Scott, never doubting but that they had brought letters of introduction to her husband, invited them to partake of her lunch. They had been walking with her and her daughters ever since that time, and appeared at the porch when the Sheriff and his party returned to dinner, as if they had been on his visiting list. The Sheriff, fancying that his wife had opened their credentials, shook hands with them with courteous cordiality. But Mrs. Scott, who was a sharp observer, interrupted the ecstatic compliments of the strangers by reminding them that her husband would be glad to have the letters of the friends

who had been so good as to write to them. It then turned out that there were no letters to be produced, and Scott, signifying that his hour for dinner approached, added that, as he supposed they meant to walk to Melrose, he could not trespass further on their time, and bowed the overwhelmed originals to the door. On entering the parlour, he found Mrs. Scott complaining very indignantly that they had gone so far as to pull out their note-book and beg an exact account not only of his age but of her own. Scott, already half relenting, laughed heartily at this misadventure, and said to his wife, "Hang the Yahoos, Charlotte, but we should have bid them stay dinner." "Devil a bite," quoth Captain Fergusson, who had come over from Huntly Burn, "they were humbugs." "Well, well, Skipper," was the Laird's reply, "for a' that the loons would hae' been nane the waur o' their kail."

It is to be regretted that no register of visitors was kept at Abbotsford. What a curious and valuable record it would have been to-day! Probably Scott entertained more distinguished guests in rank, science and literature than any nobleman of his age ever did in the same space of time. With all Scott's conviviality, it was not the sensual, but the social which acted on him. He was neither gourmet nor gourmand: he ate to live, but he

did not live to eat. He loved the simplest dishes to which he had been accustomed in the days of his youth, which his father had loved. His favourite soup was that which King "Jamie" loved, thinking himself an illused monarch if, even amid the splendour of Whitehall, there was not served on the Royal table a bowl of 'Cocky-leekie. His favourite dish was sheepshead, in which, as Lord Ellibank said, there was a good deal of confused eating. His favourite wines were champagne and claret, but he preferred a tumbler of whisky-toddy to either. Port he cared not for at all; if he drank one glass he was sure to anathematise a second, if offered, by repeating Home's epigram:

Bold and erect the Caledonian stood,  
Old was his mutton and his claret good,  
Let him drink port, the English statesman cried,  
He drank the poison and his spirit died.

He was no connoisseur of wine. From his slightly defective palate, he could not distinguish corked wine from sound, nor tell Madeira from Sherry.

At the dinner table, says Lockhart, uniformly preceding his Bordeaux, he filled out with his own hands for each guest a small libation of mountain dew into ancient little cups inlaid with silver, called quaighs, reserving for his own use one that belonged to Prince Charlie. This ancient relic

had a glass bottom, through which the Prince as he quaffed might keep his eye on the dirk hand of his companion.

The chief meal, however, was Scott's breakfast. He always had a splendid morning appetite. No foxhunter or ploughman ever prepared himself for the field by a more substantial laying in of the good things of this life. On the table there were the usual delicacies of a Scotch breakfast, while on the sideboard there was generally a round of beef, a bacon ham, and in the season kippered salmon and cold grouse, to all which the laird did ample justice. Sir Walter used to enliven the breakfast table by his quaint jokes or racy story *à propos* of some question put or remark made by his guests. Before breakfast was over, one morning, the post bag arrived containing such a budget of letters that Lord Melville, who was present, asked Scott what election was on hand. He answered, there was no election, and that he had the same shoal of letters most days, and added, "Though no one has kinder friends in the franking line, and though the Secretaries of the Post Office, and the Admiralty especially, are always ready to stretch a point in my favour, my bill for letters seldom comes under £150 a year, and as to the parcels, they are a perfect ruination." He then told with great glee a disaster that had

lately befallen him. "One morning last spring," he said, "I opened a large lump of a dispatch without looking how it was addressed, never doubting that it had travelled under some omnipotent frank like the First Lord of the Admiralty's, when, lo and behold, the contents proved to be a MS. play by a young lady of New York, who kindly requested me to read and correct it, equip it with a prologue and epilogue, procure for it a favourable reception from the manager of Drury Lane, and make Murray or Constable bleed handsomely for the copyright; and on inspecting the cover I found that I had been charged £5 for postage. This was bad enough, but I had to groan and submit. A fortnight or so after, another packet of not less formidable bulk arrived, and I was absent enough to break its seal, too, without examination. Conceive my horror when out jumped the same identical tragedy of the 'Cherokee Lovers,' stating that as the winds had been boisterous she feared the vessel entrusted with her former communication might have foundered, and therefore judged it prudent to forward a duplicate."

When the world would let him be alone, nothing pleased Scott better than to ramble among the heathery hills or in the waving woodlands, or by the bright fringe of the silvery Tweed.



It was in *Fleet Street* that Johnson said he delighted to contemplate "the full tide of human existence." With Scott, it was in the wild and *solitary places* of his own romantic Abbotsford. He would often spend an afternoon with his workmen felling trees, competing with the best of them who would fell a tree of the most measurement with the fewest number of strokes, and laughing heartily when he was victor; while on his way home he would crack his joke with some old grey-haired hedger, getting a snuff from his mull. "He talks to all his workmen," said a distinguished guest, "as if they were blood relations." Need we wonder that his servants adored him, that they rendered to him a service of love, a service which authority cannot command, and which money cannot purchase? La Bruyère says, and it is strange that he should have found it out in the court of Louis the Fourteenth, "The heart has more to do than the head in promoting the pleasures of society." These words are true. Whether it is that the man of intellect is too much wrapped up in his own importance or pursuits to take an interest in the inferior concerns of others, or that the fear of compromising his dignity puts him on points with those who approach him, or that the greatness of his name and fame strikes terror into the smaller men; whatever be the

cause, it is notorious that the intellectually great are too often deficient in the power of pleasing, the power of raying out light and love and sympathy into the hearts and homes of men. It was not so with Scott—he was simplicity and kindness itself; he had a ready sympathy and a cordial greeting for all, that dispelled the awe which his great name was apt to inspire.

Scott had much reverence for what was beneath him, the distinguishing mark of Christianity, the best of all religions. Devoutness and reverence were special features in his character. In an article in *The Nineteenth Century*, entitled “Fiction,” Mr. Ruskin says that “he cannot make out from Lockart’s farrago, the first thing he wants to know about Sir Walter, whether or not Scott, after the week-day custom, worked at his books on Sunday mornings.” Mr. Ruskin comes to the conclusion that he did not. Mr. Ruskin is mistaken; Scott did work at his books on Sunday mornings. Sunday, October 1, 1826, the record in his journal is: “Wrote my task, then walked from one till half-past four. Dogs took a hare; they always catch one on Sunday; a Puritan would say the devil was in them. I think I shall get more done this evening; I would fain conclude the volume at the Treaty of Tilsit, and then I will try something at my Canongate.” The journal

contains many such records regarding his Sunday work.

Sir Walter seldom went to church, but at Abbotsford, however full of company the house might be, he invariably announced his intention at breakfast of reading prayers at eleven o'clock, and added, "I expect you ladies and gentlemen to be all present." He read the Church of England service, and did it with impressiveness; then followed a sermon of some great divine, which he read with peculiar grace and beauty. The guests and members of the household were then free to stroll where fancy led them.

Washington Irving has graphically portrayed Scott's mode of living at Abbotsford; the passage is too good not to be extracted at length: "The noise of my chaise," says Irving, "had disturbed the quiet of the establishment; out sallied the warder of the castle, a black greyhound, and leaping on one of the blocks of stone began a furious barking. This alarm brought out the noble garrison of dogs, all open-mouthed and vociferous. In a little while the Lord of the Castle himself made his appearance; by his side jogged along a large iron-grey stag-hound of most grave demeanour, who took no part in the clamour of the canine rabble, but seemed to consider himself bound, for the

dignity of the house, to give me a courteous reception.

“Before Scott reached the gate he called out in a hearty tone welcoming me to Abbotsford. Arrived at the door of my chaise he grasped me warmly by the hand. ‘Come, drive down to the house,’ said he; ‘ye’re just in time for breakfast.’ In a few moments I found myself seated at the breakfast table, there was no one present but the family. I soon found myself quite at home, and my heart in a glow, with the cordial welcome I experienced. As we sallied forth to take a ramble every dog in the establishment turned out to attend us; in our walks Scott would frequently pause in conversation to notice his dogs and speak of them as rational companions. Maida deported himself with a gravity becoming his age and size, and seemed to consider himself called upon to preserve a great degree of dignity and decorum in our society. The young dogs were playful and gambolling; Scott amused himself with their peculiarities. ‘I make no doubt,’ said he, ‘when Maida is along with these young dogs he throws gravity aside and plays the boy as much as any of them, but he is ashamed to do so in our company, and seems to say, “Ha’ done with your nonsense, youngsters; what would the Laird and

that other gentleman think of me if I gave way to such foolery?"' His domestic animals were his friends; everything seemed to rejoice in the light of his countenance.

"Our ramble took us on the hills commanding an extensive prospect. I gazed about me for a time with mute surprise, I might almost say disappointment. I beheld a mere succession of grey waving hills, mountains in their aspect, and destitute of trees, and the far-famed Tweed, a naked stream, flowing between bare hills, without a tree or thicket in its banks, and yet such had been the magic web of poetry and romance thrown over the whole that it had a greater charm for me than the richest scenery I had beheld in England. I could not help giving utterance to my thoughts. Scott hummed for a moment to himself and looked grave; he had no idea of having his muse complimented at the expense of his native hills. 'It may be pertinacity,' said he, at length, 'but to my eye these grey hills and all this wild border country have beauties peculiar to themselves. I like the very nakedness of the land; it has something bold and stern and solitary about it. When I have been for some time in the rich scenery about Edinburgh, which is like ornamented garden land, I begin to wish myself back again among my own honest grey hills, and if I did not

see the heather at least once a year I think I should die.' I took occasion to plead, in like manner, the association of early life for my disappointment in respect to the surrounding scenery. I had been so accustomed to see hills crowned with forests and streams breaking their way through a wilderness of trees that all my ideas of romantic landscapes were apt to be wooded. 'Ay; that's the great charm of your country,' said Scott. 'You love the forest as I do the heather.'

"The conversation here turned upon Campbell's poem of Gertrude of Wyoming as illustrative of the poetic materials furnished by American scenery. Scott recited several passages of it with great delight. 'What a pity it is,' said he, 'that Campbell does not write more and oftener, and give full swing to his genius. What a grand idea is that 'Coming events cast their shadow before.' The fact is,' he added, 'Campbell is in a manner a bugbear to himself; the brightness of his early success is a detriment to all his future efforts. He is afraid of the shadow of his own fame cast before him.' We had not advanced much further when we saw the two Misses Scott advancing along the hill-side to meet us. As they approached the dogs all sprang forward to meet them. They joined

us with countenances full of health and glee. The evening having passed away delightfully in a quaint-looking apartment, half study, half drawing room, Scott read several passages from the 'Old Romance of Arthur.' It was a rich treat to hear such a work read by such a person and in such a place. His appearance as he sat reading in a large armchair, with his favourite hound Maida at his feet, and surrounded by books of reliques and border trophies, would have formed an admirable and most characteristic picture. When I retired for the night, the idea of being under the roof of Scott nearly drove sleep from my pillow.

"On the following morning I rose at an early hour and looked out. To my surprise Scott was already up and forth, seated on a fragment of stone, chatting with the workmen. I soon dressed myself and joined him. He talked about his proposed plans of Abbotsford. Happy would it have been for him could he have contented himself with the delightful little vine-covered cottage, and the simple yet hearty and hospitable style in which he lived at the time of my visit."

After this graphic narrative by Washington Irving of their doings at Abbotsford, one can thoroughly endorse the remark which Scott once made to Laidlaw, after some brilliant company

had left the room, that many a one meeting such people, and hearing such talk, could make a very lively and entertaining book of the whole, which might some day be read with interest. It is a pity that Boswell was not living in the time of Sir Walter Scott, to do for him what he has done for Samuel Johnson. What would Boswell not have given to have been a guest at Abbotsford? With what rapture he would have sat down at the dinner table with Sir Walter and Washington Irving, Wordsworth and Crabbe, Tom Moore and Maria Edgeworth, Humphry Davy and the Man of Feeling, Francis Jeffrey and Lord Cockburn, Wilkie and Terry, Constable and the Ballantynes, Gibson Lockhart, with his aristocratic bearing, his cold, severe, and sneering criticism, and the plebeian Ettrick Shepherd, with his self-conceit and rustic manners, who, as the wine cup passed nimbly round, began by calling his host Sir Walter, next Walter, and at the last Wattie, until the whole company screamed with laughter! How Boswell could have drawn them out by questions, suggestions, contentions and quotations. What a vivid picture he could have drawn, what a book he could have given to the world! But alas their wise and witty sayings are now all lost—"Gone glittering through the dream of things that were, and cannot be recalled."



Another characteristic of the Laird was his love of dogs. Indeed, they were such pre-eminent favourites with him that an acute lawyer insisted on the identity (as yet unacknowledged) of the author of "Waverley" with the poet of the "Lay," because of the persistent ingenuity with which, in both novels and poems, every opportunity was seized for their introduction. Scott had quite a garrison of dogs, and his special favourites are well known to the world. The famous Camp was twice painted by Raeburn, and Maida had been so often painted, that whenever he saw an artist with his easel, and canvas spread, he rushed off in perfect disgust. The Laird says that Camp was a dog of great strength and very handsome, extremely sagacious, faithful and affectionate to the human species, and possessed of a great turn for gaiety and drollery. "The servants used to tell him when I was seen coming home. I lived then at Ashiesteil, and there were two ways by which I might return. If the servant said, 'Camp, your master is coming back by the hill,' he ran to meet me in that direction; if the lad said by the ford, he came down to the bank of the river to welcome me. Nor did he ever make a mistake in the direction named. I could add a number of curious anecdotes of his sagacity, but they are connected with a family

loss since sustained, and are painful to recollect or detail."

An interesting anecdote of Camp is told by Laidlaw. "On one occasion the Laird was climbing a difficult and dangerous rocky pass to reach a famous waterfall, 'The Grey Mare's Tail.' Looking back," says Laidlaw, "we were struck at seeing the motions of the Sheriff's dog Camp. The dog was attending anxiously upon his master, and when the latter came to a difficult part of the rock, Camp would jump down, look up to his master's face, spring up and lick his hand and cheek, jump down again, look upwards, as if to show him the way and encourage him. We were greatly interested with the scene."

When Camp died he was buried in the garden behind 39, Castle Street, the whole family standing in tears around the grave, while Scott smoothed down the turf with the saddest of countenances.

"When my poor Camp died," he writes to Lady Abercorn, "my friends wrote as many elegies for him in different languages as ever were poured forth by Oxford or Cambridge on the death of a crowned head. I have Latin, French, Italian, Greek, Hebrew, German, Arabic, and Hindostanee poems to his memory."

Camp was succeeded by the still more celebrated Maida. To Joanna Baillie, Scott writes,

April 12, 1816: "I have added a most romantic inmate to my family—a large bloodhound, allowed to be the finest dog of the kind in Scotland, perfectly gentle, affectionate, and good-natured, and the darling of all the children. I had him as a present from Glengarry, who has refused the breed to people of the very first rank. He is between the deer-greyhound and mastiff, with a shaggy mane like a lion, and always sits behind me at dinner, his head as high as the back of my chair. 'His name is Maida,' writes the Laird of Glengarry, 'out of respect for that action in which my brother had the honour to lead the 78th Highlanders to victory.'"

Maida kept guard in Scott's sanctum. When the Sheriff, from his huge elbow-chair, snapped his fingers, the noble Maida roused himself from his lair on the hearthrug and laid his head on his master's knee to be caressed and fondled. "When he chose to leave the room he signified his inclination," said Lockhart, "by thumping the door with his huge paw, as violently as ever a fashionable footman handled a knocker in Grosvenor Square. Scott rose and opened it for him with courteous alacrity. Scott looked upon his canine companions, not as the brute, but as the mute creation, and loved them, not like Byron, for their unlikeness to man, but for

the human elements which they exhibited. It is a pleasing trait in the character of the Laird, that he made pets and companions of all his dogs, and they reciprocated his fondness. In the dark crisis of his financial ruin, the touching record in his journal is: "I have half resolved never to see the place Abbotsford again, I was to have gone there on Saturday in joy and prosperity to receive my friends. My dogs will wait for me in vain. It is foolish, but the thought of parting from those dumb creatures has moved me more than any of the painful reflections I have put down. Poor things, I must get them kind masters; there may be yet those that love me who may love my dog because it has been mine. I find my dogs' feet on my knees, I hear them whining and seeking me everywhere; this is nonsense, but it is what they would do could they know how things are."

In the autumn of 1818, the Laird received a formal announcement that it was the desire of the Prince Regent to confer on him a Baronetcy. After considerable hesitation, Scott agreed to accept the proffered honour, not so much for his own sake as for that of his son, who had chosen the profession of a soldier. To his friend Morritt he thus writes: "It would be easy saying a parcel of fine things about my contempt of rank, and so

forth, but although I would not have gone a step out of my way to have asked, or bought, or begged, or borrowed a distinction which to me personally will rather be inconvenient than otherwise, yet coming as it does directly from the source of feudal honours, and as an honour, I am really gratified with it, especially as it is intimated that it is His Royal Highness's pleasure to heat the oven for me expressly, without waiting until he has some new batch of baronets ready in dough. Remember, I anticipate the jest, 'I like not such grinning honours as Sir Walter hath.' After all, if one must speak of themselves, I have my quarters and emblazonments free of all stains but Border theft and high treason, which, I hope, are gentleman-like crimes, and I hope Sir Walter Scott will not sound worse than Sir Humphry Davy, though my merits are as much under his in point of utility as can well be imagined. But a name is something, and mine is the better of the two." His health, says Lockhart, prevented him from going up to the fountain of honour for more than a year.

At this time, when Scott was in the zenith of his fame, realising from his works £10,000 a year, caressed by princes, nobles, and men of letters, he was stricken by disease, assailed by cramp, and his hair became as white as snow.

The year 1820 was a memorable one in the calendar of Abbotsford. At the beginning of this year Scott went to London and received the baronetcy from the King in person. His Majesty said, as the poet kissed his hand, "I shall always reflect with pleasure on Sir Walter Scott's having been the first creation of my reign." "Rank," says Johnson, "may be conferred by princes, and wealth bequeathed by misers or robbers; but the honours of a lasting name, and the veneration of distant ages, only the sons of learning have the power of bestowing." The King afterwards commanded him to sit to Sir Thomas Laurance for a portrait to be placed in the gallery of distinguished men at Windsor Castle. "I want," said Scott, "to have in 'Maida,' so as there may be one handsome fellow in the party." Laurance used to say that, in his judgment, the two greatest men he ever drew were the Duke of Wellington and Sir Walter Scott. Curiously, both selected the same hour for sitting—seven in the morning. Scott also sat to Chantrey for his bust—that admirable work of art which has made his features familiar in every quarter of the world. On this occasion he met the Duke of York, lords and ladies, and many other great ones of the hour. He was specially charmed with Lady Huntly, who sang Scotch

songs like a Highland angel. Her ladyship's variations of "Kenmure's on and awa" were enough, Scott told her, "to raise the whole countryside." Here he met the famous John Lundie, turned doctor at Hexham, whose specifics were "laudamy and calamy," and who consoled himself with the thought that "if he did kill a few Englishmen by his drugs it would be long ere he made up for Flodden." He had also a pleasant meeting with Joanna Baillie, and after pressing on Lord Melville the claims of John Wilson to the Edinburgh Chair of Moral Philosophy, which he obtained, the Laird, as soon as he got out of the hands of his painter and sculptor, at once left London and returned to Abbotsford as Sir Walter Scott.

The reason of Sir Walter's hurried flight from London was due to a Scottish as well as a classical superstition that marriages in May are unfortunate. Accordingly Scott arrived at Abbotsford late in April, and on the 29th of that month gave the hand of his eldest daughter to young Lockhart, who afterwards became his biographer. Lockhart was of good family, handsome in person, haughty in manner, scornful in criticism, an accomplished scholar, and afterwards took high rank in the world of letters. Their married life was a happy one. Sir Walter after the marriage

wrote to his friend, the Hon. Mrs. Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth, "Mr. Lockhart, to whom Sophia is married, is the husband of her choice. He is a man of excellent talents, master of his pen and of his pencil, handsome in person, and well-mannered, though wanting that ease which the *usage du monde* alone can give. I like him very much, for having no son who promises to take a literary turn, it is of importance to me, both in point of comfort and otherwise, to have some such intimate friend and relation whose pursuits and habits are similar to my own, so that on the whole I trust I have gained a son instead of losing a daughter."

Next year we find the Laird again in London at the Coronation of George IV. The Ettrick Shepherd was to have accompanied him, but as Scott humorously put it, "He (Hogg) stood balancing the matter whether to go to the Coronation or to a fair of Saint Boswell, and the fair carried it." At the close of that brilliant scene, Scott received a signal mark of homage to his genius. Missing his carriage, he had to walk home from Westminster after the banquet, between two and three o'clock in the morning, when he and a young friend who was accompanying him found themselves locked in the crowd about Whitehall. Scott, observing an open space kept



clear for the dignitaries by the Scotch Greys, asked an officer on guard to allow him to pass along. He replied it was impossible, his orders were strict. At this moment a wild wave of the multitude came rolling behind, and his companion exclaimed, "Sir Walter Scott, take care." The officer cried out, "What, Sir Walter Scott! he shall pass at all events; make room, men, for our illustrious countryman," and amid shouts of "Sir Walter Scott, God bless him," in a moment he was within the guarded line of safety.

The splendour of the Coronation as a mere spectacle was imposing in the extreme; "throwing into the shade," says Scott, "all scenes of a similar magnificence, from the Field of Cloth of Gold down to the present day." "The King himself," he adds, "when presiding at the banquet, amid the long line of his nobles, looked every inch a king, and nothing could exceed the grace with which he accepted and returned their various acts of homage, rendered to him in the course of that long day."

After the Coronation, Sir Walter had more than one interview with the King, and on one occasion found an opportunity of expressing the profound gratification it would be to the Scottish people, if His Majesty would honour them by paying a visit to his Northern Kingdom and give his subjects an

opportunity of showing their loyalty. The King good-humouredly, out of the respect which he entertained for his petitioner, whom he called the "Poet of Princes," and to whom he had shown many kindnesses when Prince Regent, consented to visit Scotland in August, 1822.

On this as on previous occasions, Scott was flattered and feasted by the *élite* of London Society, men of rank, science, and literature vying with each other in doing him honour.

Here is the record of one day:—*November 16, 1826.*—"Breakfasted with Rogers. He was exceedingly entertaining in his dry, quiet, sarcastic manner. At eleven, to the Duke of Wellington's. Thence I passed to the Colonial office." (Evening.) "I dined at the Admiralty *au grand couvert*. No less than five Cabinet Ministers were present. The cheer was excellent, but the presence of too many men of distinguished rank and power always freezes the conversation. Each lamp shines brightest when placed by itself; when too close, they neutralise each other."

He writes to his soldier son regarding the entertainments got up in his honour, that he longed to be at Abbotsford again, being *heartily tired* of fine company and fine living, from dukes and duchesses down to turbot and plover's eggs. "It is very well for a while," he said, "but to be kept at it

makes one feel like a poodle dog compelled to stand for ever on his hind legs."

How different with Johnson! "Sir," said he to Boswell, "when a man is *tired of London*, he is *tired of life*; for there is in London all that life can afford."

Before leaving London Scott had the satisfaction of knowing that four busts of himself in marble had been executed by Sir F. Chantrey; one for the Royal Gallery at Windsor, another for Apsley House, a third for the sculptor's own private study, and the original bust, which was presented to Sir Walter himself, with Chantrey's compliments. A year later another was executed for Sir Robert Peel's gallery at Drayton.

In returning, Scott visited Stratford-on-Avon, and wrote on the wall of the room a name only second among British authors to that of its original tenant.

The Laird, having returned to Abbotsford from the whirl of London Society, resumed his literary labours. Time drifts on, and on the 20th July, 1822, he leaves his books, and trees, and peasants at Abbotsford for Edinburgh, to make preparations on a gigantic scale for the reception of his Sovereign.

While Byron was writing with tremendous power and infinite scorn, satirising in the bitterest

terms the Royal visit paid the year before by "Fum the Fourth" to Ireland, that land "which he loved like his bride," Scott was writing songs in praise of the King, to be sung at the Royal table, and ballads to be sung by beggars in the streets.

Of course there was a committee, but Scott was the committee. He had many parts to play, and on the whole he played them well, although in certain details his zeal got the better of his judgment. His kilted panorama was a little overdone. The work that fell to his share in the preparation of the Royal programme was enormous. The committee, when at their wits' end, ever had recourse to him, and he was generally equal to the emergency. The most difficult part he had to play was the reconciliation of the fiery rival chieftains for precedence in the Royal procession. Johnson, in somewhat similar circumstances, was asked to settle the relative merits of two rival poets. "Sir," said he, "it is difficult to settle the precedence between a louse and a flea." How different with Sir Walter! He flattered the rival chieftains in poetry, and feasted them at his dinner table; as the champagne went nimbly round, he promised to give each one in the Royal procession the relative position which his ancestor had occupied on the field of Bannockburn. This was

sufficient; they had confidence in him whom they recognised as the restorer and blazoner of their ancient traditional glory. Before the evening was over the rival chiefs embraced each other as brethren.

The long-looked-for day, the 14th August, came, and although Sir Walter in his ballad had desired the clergy to "wrestle for fair weather," the *Royal George* arrived in Leith waters amidst a torrent of rain, which prevented the embarkation of the King till next day. Notwithstanding we see Peveril and his snowy peak rowing through thick rain to the Royal yacht. The King is standing on the deck, and when informed that Scott is alongside he exclaims, "What! Sir Walter Scott! The man in Scotland I most wish to see. Let him come up." When he stepped on the quarter deck his Majesty called for a bottle of Highland whisky, and having drunk his health desired his glass to be filled for him. Scott, after drinking his bumper, made a request that the King would bestow on him the glass out of which his Majesty had just drunk his health. This being granted, the precious glass was carefully wrapped up and consigned to the capacious pocket at the back of his coat, which he deemed the safest place. On his reaching home, he found that Crabbe, the poet, had arrived on a visit. In the joy of meeting

him the Royal gift was forgotten. After embracing the venerable man, Scott sat down beside him and the glass was crushed to atoms. His scream and gesture made Lady Scott conclude that he had sat down on a pair of scissors or such-like. He had been slightly wounded—a scratch of no great consequence. What troubled him more was that the Royal glass had perished and could not be replaced. I have given this ludicrous episode, as Sir Walter's forgetfulness of the Royal gift atones in some measure for his vanity in begging it.

The next day, 15th August, Scott was a proud and busy man. The bagpipes were a striking feature in the procession of the day. Indeed, Sir Walter used jocularly to say that the height of a Highlander's happiness consisted in "twenty-four bagpipe players assembled together in one room, all playing at the same time different tunes." The aspect of the city that day was splendid beyond description. Sir Walter, arrayed in Highland costume and in an open carriage and four, driven by his old Presbyterian coachman, with cocked hat and flaxen wig, had deservedly a prominent position in the Royal procession from Leith to Holyrood, which was a magnificent spectacle.

Amidst the common crowd who welcomed the King to his northern capital, stood two uncommon

men, Crabbe, the poet, "thinking much, saying nothing, adding not a solitary cheer to the sea of sound roaring on every side," and Dr. Chalmers, with his noble head not yet grown grey, uncovered, cheering to the echo, and murmuring "God bless him, he is a fine fellow."

The King that day witnessed an incident which impressed him greatly. As he came along the Calton Hill Road the crowd made a rush downhill toward the Royal carriage, and the King saw a child fall. "Had it been in London," he said, "the child would have been trampled to death," and he expected nothing else. But in a moment there was a loud cry of "Stop," and five or six men linked themselves together arm in arm and set themselves to keep off the crowd, standing like an arch; then a man stepped forward before them and lifted the boy, and held him up above the crowd to show that he was saved. Sir Walter heard his Majesty relate this twice.

The King took up his residence at Dalkeith Palace, and here his dinner party almost nightly included Sir Walter. From Dalkeith he went now and again and held receptions and drawing-rooms in Holyrood. The King, at his first *levée*, to the merriment of some and the delight of Scott, appeared in the full Highland garb, the brilliant Stuart tartan. Lord Macaulay says "that King

George thought that he could not give a more striking proof for his respect of the usage which had prevailed in Scotland before the Union than by disguising himself in what, before the Union, was considered the dress of a thief." An air of ridicule and caricature was cast upon the whole affair by a portentous London alderman, who, in a sudden burst of loyalty, had also donned a Celtic garb of the self-same conspicuous Stuart tartan. There he was, to the chagrin of the King, towering and blazing among and above the genuine Glen-garries and Macleods and Macgregors, a figure even more portly than his "Royal Master." As Lord Byron has it:

He caught Sir William Curtis in a kilt,—  
While throng'd the chiefs of every Highland clan  
To hail their brother, Vich Ian Alderman!

An alderman who could burlesque such a monarch "was indeed a credit to his turtle-soup."

A few years ago, at one of the portrait exhibitions in London, was hung up for the admiration of visitors a representation of the King as he appeared at his *levée*, which no one could behold without exploding with laughter. It portrayed, says Macaulay, "a stalwart Highlander in full costume, some seven or eight feet high, as far as he could be judged, and with the most tremendous muscular development. Above its



shoulders rose a black cylindrical column, which was, in fact, the stock with which our ancestors used to encourage an attack of apoplexy. Above this again appeared the red puffy cheeks of the first gentleman in Europe, suggestive of innumerable bottles of port and Burgundy at Carlton House. And the whole structure was surmounted by a bonnet with waving plumes. Anything more grotesque could hardly be invented."

Sir Walter was responsible, more than any other man, for this royal burlesque and unconscious absurdity.

One Sunday the King attended Divine service in St. Giles' Cathedral. The silence of the multitude, in contrast with the wild enthusiasm of the reception which he met with on the week-days, struck him as remarkable. Sunday in the Edinburgh of 1822 was reserved for the worship of the King of kings. During the Royal fortnight there was another gala day on which the Laird of Abbotsford figured prominently in a procession from Holyrood to the Castle. The royal cavalcade was arranged by Sir Walter for the purpose of calling up as exactly as might be the ancient ceremony of the "Riding of the Parliament." Scott himself received applause only second to that awarded to his Sovereign. Peel, who was then Home Secretary, says, "On the

day on which his Majesty was to pass from Holyrood, Scott proposed to me to accompany him up the High Street to see whether the arrangements were complete. I said to him, 'You are trying a dangerous experiment; you will never get through in privacy.' He said, 'They are entirely absorbed in loyalty.' But I was the better prophet; he was recognised from the one extremity of the street to the other, and never did I see such an instance of national devotion expressed."

When Sir Walter stood that day with the King on the chief bastion of the ancient fortress, he bewailed the absence of "Mons Meg," which had been taken from the Castle to the Tower of London in 1746, in language which his Majesty could not resist. By-and-by, through the influence of the King and his Premier, the Duke of Wellington, "Mons Meg" was restored to the place from whence it was taken, where it now remains.

The Royal procession on this occasion, although mixed with a good deal of trumpery, must have been a magnificent spectacle, but not half so interesting as when Queen Victoria, twenty years afterwards, on the 3rd September, 1842, with Albert by her side, a perfect contrast to King George in person, morals, and manners, rode up

from Holyrood to the Castle, through loyal multitudes who cheered them to the echo.

During the sojourn of the King in his northern capital the magistrates entertained him with a banquet in Parliament House. The Laird of Abbotsford presided over one of the tables. His Majesty having proposed the health of the magistrates, rose and said, "There is one, and but one, more toast that I shall ask you to join with me in drinking; I shall simply give you," said he, "'The chieftains and clans of Scotland, and prosperity to the 'Land of Cakes'.'" Scott's novels were responsible for the hallucination which had taken possession of the Royal mind that the acme of Scotland's glory consisted in her Highland clans and chieftains.

"This fashion of talking twaddle," says Lord Macaulay, "about claymore, and targets, and kilts reached its height in the marvellous performance of our venerated ruler George IV."

It would be a work of supererogation to dwell further on the particulars of the Royal visit. Many regretted the prominent part played by Scotland's greatest son in the Royal drama, considering the reputation borne by the chief actor. It was even rumoured and inserted in print by the authoress of "Clan Albin," and editor of "Tait," that his Majesty did not fully

appreciate Scott's service, and spoke of him and "his everlasting clans and tartans as a bore." I believe this rumour to have been a scandalous myth, for on the eve of the King's departure Scott received a letter from Mr. Peel, the Home Secretary, saying: "The King has commanded me to acquaint you that he cannot bid Scotland adieu without conveying to you individually his warm personal acknowledgments. His Majesty well knows how many difficulties have been smoothed, and how much has been effected by your unremitting activity, by your knowledge of your countrymen, and by the just estimation in which they hold you. The King wishes to make you the channel of conveying to the Highland chiefs and their followers, who have given to the varied scenes which we have witnessed so peculiar and romantic a character, his particular thanks for their attendance, and his warm approbation of their uniform deportment." Even apart from that letter, I could not believe the King to have been so ungrateful to Scott, who, more than any other man, had done so much to defend "his Majesty's battered reputation and tottering throne." But, as Johnson says: "Gratitude is a fruit of rare cultivation. You do not find it among gross people."

On the 29th of August the King embarked

from the splendid residence of the Earl of Hopteoun on the Firth of Forth. His Majesty in the moment of his departure, at Scott's request, who was present to wish him God-speed, conferred the honour of knighthood on Adam Paterson, Deputy-keeper of the Scottish Regalia, and Henry Raeburn, the famous Scottish artist. Immediately thereafter the *Royal George* set sail, and the King bade farewell to Scotland never more to return.

What a magnificent reception his Majesty received in Scotland, from what he received when he visited Ireland the previous year. "The Irish," said Grattan, "abused King George IV. in every possible shape. First, they abused his person, of which he is very vain. Secondly, they abused his mistress, of whom he is very fond. And not content with all that, they praised his own wife."

After the King's departure the Laird returned to Abbotsford, to resume his gigantic literary labours.

About this time it occurred to Scott, now that the last of the Stuarts was dead, that it would be a graceful recognition of the now universal loyalty of all Scots, Highlanders as well as Lowlanders, to the throne, if the peerages forfeited in consequence of the insurrections of 1715 and 1745 were restored. The Laird himself drafted the memorial which

was presented by the proscribed families. When the King and his Parliament granted their petition, and an Act for the reversal was passed, the families whose ancient titles were restored vied with each other in their expression of gratitude to Scott for his exertions on their behalf.

In the August of this year the famous Miss Edgeworth arrived at Abbotsford on a visit, and of all Scott's visitors none met with a more sincere welcome. The Laird received her at the archway. In Maria he hailed a sister spirit—it was the reunion of two kindred souls. They resembled each other in humour, in pathos, and in power of picturing ancient times. Miss Edgeworth remarked that “Dean Swift had said that he had written his books that people might learn to treat him as a lord, but that Scott had written his that he might be able to treat people as a great lord ought to do.” And so, in truth, he did treat his visitors, as she could testify. One day there was a fishing in a neighbouring loch and a luncheon on its banks; another the whole party would picnic to the waterfall in the Rhymer's glen, and the stone on which Maria that day sat was called ever afterwards, says Lockhart, “Edgeworth Stone.” A third day they journeyed as far as the Braes of Yarrow, where at sunset they dined beside the ruined chapel overlooking St. Mary's loch, where

the ladies sung and the Laird recited until it was time to return to Abbotsford by the soft light of the loveliest harvest moon. Thus were the days of Maria's pleasant visit whiled away. The fortnight ended, the happiest probably in the life of Scott, a perfect contrast to the Royal fortnight of the previous year. At length the vision vanished; Maria left Abbotsford and never saw it more.

It is interesting to trace year by year the alternate light and shade that fell upon the life of the Laird of Abbotsford. One year he hears of his baronetcy and of his mother's death; another year he is at the burial of John Ballantyne and at the coronation of George IV.; next year he welcomes the King to Scotland, and amid the Royal festivities carries out to burial his dear friend William Erskine (Lord Kinnedder), and returns to plunge into some scene of high gaiety,

“To hide in rant the heartache of the night.”

Next year he spends with Maria Edgeworth the happiest fortnight of his life, a few months afterwards his dear brother dies, and so on through all the varied scenes of human life:

“For all men's souls twixt sorrow and love are cast,  
As on the earth each lingers his brief space;  
While surely nightfall comes when each man's face  
In death's obliteration sinks at last,  
As a deserted wind-tossed sea's foam trace—  
Life's chilled boughs emptied by death's autumn blast.”

The year 1824 was a busy and eventful one to the Laird of Abbotsford. This year "Redgauntlet" was sent forth to the world. This year Scott painted his mansion and replenished his museum; furnished anew his library; corresponded with many distinguished foreigners; wrote an epitaph for "Maida," and a speech for the opening of the Edinburgh Academy, which afterwards produced such scholars as the late Archbishop of Canterbury and Robertson of Brighton; and witnessed the terrible fire which reduced many of the historic buildings to ashes. This year he heard with joy of his son and heir's betrothal to the pretty heiress of Lochore, upon whom he settled Abbotsford, exclaiming the moment he signed the deed, "I have now parted with my lands with more pleasure than I ever derived from the acquisition or possession of them, and if I be spared for ten years I think I may promise to settle as much more again upon these young folks."

This year died Byron, "the grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme." No death in modern times caused such sensation. Concerning Byron's faults, in reference to his early and sudden death, Scott says, "It is as if the great orb of day were to disappear for ever from our view while we were busy looking through a telescope at the spots which bedimmed its lustre." Conscious of the



influence he exercised over the mind of his great contemporary, Scott remarked to a friend that he regretted that Byron and he had not been thrown more together that he might have withdrawn him from many of the errors of his life, and saved him from an early grave. Scott, however, did Byron noble service in the darkest hour of his life by defending him in *The Quarterly Review* "against the howl of the whole world."

1825 was a year of sunshine at Abbotsford. This year, in February, Sir Walter's son and heir was married to the lovely young heiress of Lochore. After the wedding the young couple started for the bridegroom's regimental quarters in Ireland, where the Laird promised to visit them in the summer. Meanwhile Sir Walter's literary labours and social functions at Abbotsford went on as usual. This year he commenced his "Great Life of Napoleon." This year Constable, the "Napoleon of the realms of print," inaugurated a grand scheme of revolution in the art and traffic of publishing. He discussed it one evening after dinner at Abbotsford with Scott, Ballantyne, and Lockhart. "Literary genius," said Constable, "may or may not have done its best, but the trades are in their cradle." The Laird, eyeing the florid publisher's beaming countenance and the

equally rubicund countenance of the portly printer, pushing the bottles round with a chuckle, bade Lockhart, "Give our twa sonsie babies a drap of mother's milk."

As they were taking their suck, Scott remarked that he much doubted whether any Laird within ten miles of Abbotsford spent ten pounds per annum on the literature of the day."

"No," replied Constable, "there's no market among them that's worth one's thinking about. They are contented with a review or a magazine, or a paltry subscription to some circulating library. But if I live for half-a-dozen years, I'll make it impossible that there should not be a good library in every decent house." "Troth," says the Laird, "you are indeed likely to be the 'Grand Napoleon of the realms of print.'" "If you outlive me," says Constable, with a smile, "I bespeak that line for my tombstone; but, in the meantime, may I presume to ask you to be my right-hand man when I open my campaign of Marengo? I have now settled my outline of operations—a half-crown volume every month, which must and shall sell, not by thousands, but by hundreds of thousands—ay, by millions, twelve volumes a year, so good that millions must wish to have them, and so cheap that every butcher's callant may have them if he pleases to let me tax him sixpence a week."

Constable not only claimed, but obtained Scott's support : it was agreed that the first series of cheap volumes, not for the classes, but for the masses, should be the "Waverley Novels." "Both poet and publisher," says Lockhart, "talking over the past and future course of their lives, agreed that the years to come were likely to be more prosperous than any they had as yet seen." Alas, alas, "the best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley."

In July this year the Laird paid his promised visit to Ireland, which Johnson said, "Was worth *seeing*, but not worth *going to see*." He sailed from Glasgow, and was charmed with the magnificent scenery on the Firth of Clyde. He arrived with his party at Dublin, having halted at Drogheda to visit the field of the battle of the Boyne. They reached Walter's house in Stephen's Green in time for dinner, and Scott looked round with joy and pride as he first sat at his son's table. "How pleasant it is," says Scott, "for a father to sit at his child's board. It is like an aged man reclining under the shadow of the oak which he has planted." Next day he was besieged with visitors—a deputation to invite him to a public banquet; a messenger from the Lord Lieutenant, inviting him next day to dinner; the Provost of Trinity College, to announce that the University

desired to confer on him the degree of Doctor of Laws, which his own Alma Mater had never offered him ; the Archbishop of Dublin and the *élite* of the city to pay him their respects. When he drove through the streets the people cheered him to the echo ; when he entered the theatres he received an ovation ; when he travelled through Ireland it was like a royal procession. Men of all ranks and conditions vied with each other to do him honour. What charmed him most of all was his visit to Edgeworthstown, where he renewed his friendship with the gifted Maria, then at the height of her literary fame.

His Irish excursion abounded with many characteristic episodes. A mad poet named O'Kelly amused him much, who, calling on him, inflicted on him the lines :—

Three poets, of three different nations born,  
The United Kingdom in this age adorn ;  
Byron of England, Scott of Scotland's blood,  
And Erin's pride, O'Kelly, great and good.

On one occasion a female guide had shown him and his party some of the usual scenes ; when he was gone a gentleman told her he was a poet. "Poet," said she, "devil a bit of him, but an honourable gentleman, he gave me half-a-crown." On another occasion he gave a fellow a shilling

when the fee was sixpence, "Remember you owe me a sixpence, Pat." "May your honour live till I pay ye." Pat's raiment would have been dearly purchased at the sum. "The dress of the peasantry," says Sir Walter, "was such a labyrinth of rags that I often feared that some button would give way and shame us all."

Bathing on the strand in the Bay of Kil——, during Scott's visit, was carried on in a rather primitive style. A shower-bath was given by a man who climbed up at the back of the bath, carrying a bucket full of water, which he poured through a colander on the bather. A lady one day had taken her place in the bath, quite ready for the shower, when she heard a voice say to her, through the colander, "If you'd be plazed, my lady, to stand a little more to the west, I'd be able to give it to you better."

Sir Walter left the Emerald Isle, charmed with the Irish people. Their enthusiastic reception of him had astonished him beyond measure, as he had looked upon Ireland as a nation that never read.

On Scott's way home, at the invitation of Canning, he went round by Windermere, where, under the same roof-tree, he met three of the most remarkable men of that generation—Canning, Wordsworth, and Christopher North. With these kindred spirits, "Scott spent his last thoroughly

triumphant days. Ah, little thought he they were the last.”

On his arrival at Abbotsford, the Laird quietly resumed the usual routine of his life—the meditative ramble, the bracing ride, the burning of the water, the excitement of the hunting field, the afternoon spell at the woodman’s axe, or the “wassail of the hall,” alternatively with his gigantic labours on the life of the “Emperor.”

In the autumn of this year the Laird entertained some illustrious visitors, among others Lord Gifford and his lady, the Bishop of Exeter, and Tom Moore. Scott and Moore, although a perfect contrast in many respects, had much in common. Both were patriotic poets, both were shrewd men of the world and knew society in all its phases, from the highest to the lowest. Scott had a confidant in Moore. On the day of his arrival, after dinner, when they were quite alone, Scott surprised and delighted Moore by dropping the mask which the “great unknown” had worn so long, and revealed to him without reserve that the “Waverley Novels” were his own, that they had been to him a mine of wealth, but that he failed in them now, and could no longer make them so good as at first, adding, “Now, my dear Moore, we are friends for life.” There can be no manner of doubt that this revelation had been an open

secret to a chosen few. Years before this Byron, in his absence from England, had desired Murray to send him any new books "by, or reasonably presumed to be by, Walter Scott." Yet it is apparent from this request that even Byron had no absolute certainty of the author of "Waverley," nothing but a strong suspicion.

It is interesting to know what Scott and Moore when they parted thought of each other. In Moore's diary the record is: "I parted with Scott with the feeling that all the world might admire him in his works, but that those only could learn to love him as he deserved who had seen him at Abbotsford. Perhaps a not very dignified phrase would express my feelings better than any fine one, it was that he was a thorough good fellow." In Scott's private note-book the record is: "Tom Moore is the most exquisite warbler I ever heard. There is a manly frankness with perfect ease and good breeding about him which is delightful. I was aware that Byron had often spoken of Moore and myself in the same breath and with the same regard, so I was curious to see what there could be in common betwixt us, Moore having lived so much in the gay world, I in the country and with people of business and sometimes with politicians; Moore a scholar, I none; he a musician and artist, I without knowledge of

a note; he a democrat, I an aristocrat; with many other points of difference besides, he being an Irishman, I a Scotchman, and both tolerably national. Yet there is a point of resemblance, and a strong one. We are both good-natured fellows, who rather seek to enjoy what is going forward than to maintain our dignity as lions, and we have both seen the world too widely and too well not to condemn in our souls the imaginery consequence of literary people who walk with their noses in the air, and remind me always of a fellow whom Johnson met in an alehouse and who called himself ‘the great Twalmy, inventor of the flood-gate iron for smoothing linen.’ He also enjoys the *mot pour rire*, and so do I.”

After the author of “Lalla Rookh” had taken his departure from Abbotsford, there arrived another guest of a very different type, the entertainment of whom shows how admirably the Laird could adapt himself to all ranks and conditions of people. This visitor was a Mrs. Coutts by name, widow of a famous London banker. She had commenced life as a comic actress and died Duchess of St. Albans. This wealthy widow, the mistress of millions, and her retinue descended upon Abbotsford with three carriages, each drawn by four horses. “The retinue consisted of the Duke of St. Albans and his Grace’s sister, a



couple of physicians, as she would not trust her precious person to the care of one, and a brace of bedchamber-women, because in her state of widowhood she dreaded ghosts, and one Abagail had to keep watch by night." It so happened that on the widow's arrival there were other guests at Abbotsford, several English and Scotch ladies of high birth and rank who were disposed to cut Mrs. Coutts for her vulgarity.

The shrewd host noticed it at the dinner table, but managed by his dexterity to prevent any unpleasantness arising; yet he felt the mischief was still there, scotched but not dead. It is well known how haughty women of fashion can contrive to make themselves disagreeable and others uncomfortable without actual incivility.

After dinner the Laird cut the gentleman's sederunt short, and, having joined the ladies in the drawing-room, managed to withdraw the youngest and gayest and cleverest and also highest in rank (the late Marchioness of Northampton), and said to her, "I want to speak to you about Mrs. Coutts; we have known each other a good while, and I know you will not take anything I say in ill part. It is, I hear, not uncommon among the fine ladies of London to be very well pleased to accept invitations, and even sometimes to hunt after them, to Mrs. Coutts'

grand balls and *fêtes*, and then if they meet her in any private circle to give her the cold shoulder. This you will agree with me is shabby. I am sure you would not for the world do such a thing, but you must permit me to take the great liberty of saying that I think the style you have received my guest, Mrs. Coutts, this evening is to a certain extent a sin of the same order. You were all told a couple of days ago that I accepted her visit, and that she would arrive to-day to stay three nights. Now, if any of you had not been disposed to be of my party at the same time with her, there was plenty of time for you to have gone away before she came, and as none of you moved and it was impossible to fancy that any of you would remain out of mere curiosity, I thought I had a perfect right to calculate on your having made up your minds to help me out with her." Lady Northampton (who had been his ward) replied, "I thank you, Sir Walter; you have done me the great honour to speak as if I had been your daughter, and depend upon it you shall be obeyed with heart and goodwill." Shortly afterwards her Ladyship was seen passing from one to another of her exclusive set, holding with each a short confab, which satisfied him that now all was right. By-and-by Sir Walter desired the Marchioness to sing a song which he named, as

he thought it would please Mrs. Coutts. "Nothing could gratify her more than to please Mrs. Coutts." The widow was charmed, the strained relation of the circle was relieved, and the evening went pleasantly and merrily along. Mrs. Coutts stayed her three days, and left Abbotsford enraptured with her host, and delighted with his other guests.

A critic has said that Sir Walter was so anxious about the comforts of Mrs. Coutts "because he worshipped wealth." Mistaken thought. I believe that the Laird would have done as much for any guest, even the poorest that ever shared the hospitality of Abbotsford. Scott was a prince in courtesy, he had no ostentation, no assumption of lordly superiority, but with cordial hospitality placed all his guests at their ease, whatever might be their rank in society or in the world of letters; so long as they remained his guests he treated them as he did Mrs. Coutts and put them all on a footing of perfect equality.

About this time the first threatenings of the commercial storm that was to burst upon the country with such terrific violence were felt at Abbotsford. Lockhart in London heard that "the trade" was in danger, and with it the house of Constable and Co., and hurried with the news to Abbotsford. Scott received the tidings incred-

lously, but was more anxious than he appeared. After dinner he called for his carriage, and drove over to Constable's, but returned to Abbotsford reassured that all was right. Alas! all was wrong, but the ruin was not just yet. Two months had not passed when, one morning, 17th January, 1826, Skene entered the study of Scott, who rose from his writing table, and holding out his hand, said: "Skene, this is the hand of a beggar; Constable has failed, and I am ruined *de fond en comble*." Five days after the record in his journal is "I have walked my last in the domains I have planted, sat the last time in the halls I have built." Sir Walter at that moment, except in *name*, was not the Laird of Abbotsford.

## THE BANKRUPT.

THE task of analysing the greatest financial catastrophe that ever overtook a man of genius is unspeakably painful. Lockhart would have the world to believe that Sir Walter was a man of wealth, but was unwittingly ensnared into the subtle net of the Ballantynes and Constable, through whom he was ruined. Unhappily for the cause of truth and justice, Lockhart has gained the world's ear.

It will be necessary to glance at the history of the principal actors in this strange drama before analysing the evidence which Lockhart has produced in support of his contention.

James Ballantyne and Walter Scott were schoolfellows in the old school of Kelso. They sat together at the same desk, where was commenced a friendship which death alone terminated. James was educated for the profession of law, and in 1795 settled as a solicitor in Kelso. He was a young man of literary ability which had attracted the attention of the nobility and gentry in the neighbourhood. They prevailed on him in

1796 to start a newspaper, to be called *The Kelso Mail*, in opposition to one of democratic tendencies. James conducted the paper with such conspicuous ability that it practically eclipsed its opponent.

Being in Edinburgh one day in 1799, he accidentally met Scott, who suggested that he might print a few copies of his early ballads for private circulation. Scott was so delighted with the beauty of the type and artistic get-up of the little book that he employed Ballantyne to print his first important work, "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border."

Meanwhile Scott earnestly desired his friend to come to Edinburgh. Lockhart ascribes this desire on the part of Scott to friendship. There are equally good reasons for believing that Scott even thus early had ulterior views in inviting his friend to the metropolis. Lockhart admits that Scott long before this cast a shrewd and penetrating eye over the field of literary enterprise, and developed in his own mind the outlines of many extensive plans which wanted nothing but the command of a sufficient body of able subalterns to be carried into execution with splendid success.

In James Ballantyne, a man of literary ability and an artist as regarded type, Scott found a subaltern and literary factotum whom he thought

would suit admirably. In 1802 Scott gives his old schoolfellow a loan of £500, and before the end of the year James is established in business as a printer in Edinburgh. The splendid workmanship attracted attention not only in Edinburgh but in London. Scott writes to John Ballantyne: "Longman and Rees are delighted with the printing." The consequence of such approbation was a rapid increase in business. Such was the beginning of the Ballantyne Press, destined to become famous.

We shall now glance at the history of *John Ballantyne*. In his earlier years John carried on the same kind of business as his father in Kelso. Lockhart's assertion that John's goods were sold off by auction for the benefit of his creditors is utterly groundless. Lockhart afterwards admitted this to be the case, saying that "he inferred from John's language about his goods and furniture with difficulty paying his debts that the goods were disposed of by auction." A very slender proof for such a very strong assertion. Lockhart also informs us that John was a "tailor," and with a sneer adds, "I have been told that 'Rigdum' was considered as rather an expert snip among the Brummels and D'Orsays of Kelso." This assertion is equally as unfounded as the last, and is probably another of

his "inferences." Ballantyne's son in a pamphlet refuted these and other calumnious assertions. Lockhart replied, "The pamphleteers may or may not be right in contradicting me upon these particulars, but of what consequence are they?" In that case, even if they had been correct, his only motive in repeating them could have been wantonly to inflict needless pain. It was of no consequence for him to state them, but having been stated, and falsely stated, it *was* of consequence that they should have been contradicted. It will, therefore, in future be necessary to receive with caution Lockhart's "facts" concerning Constable and Ballantyne, lest after examination they are found to be only "inferences." A faithful biographer should never infer when facts are obtainable.

John Ballantyne carried on business in Kelso for ten years, from 1795 to the end of 1805, and his credit and respectability were never impeached until Lockhart in the bitterest manner thought proper to do so. These details, as Lockhart himself says, "are of no consequence in reference to the life of Sir Walter Scott." True, but they illustrate the spirit in which that life is written so far as the Ballantynes are concerned.

We shall now glance at the history of Constable. Constable started business as a book-



seller in Edinburgh. He was an adept in selecting antiquarian works, and had for motto swung over his door, "Scarce Old Books," which Sir Walter slyly suggested should be changed to "Scarce o' Books." In his youthful days, when travelling was expensive and tedious, his country customers would make the most extraordinary demands on his time and patience. One would write requesting him "to select a book on justification by faith, and a governess who could bring her own piano." Another would desire him to send a supply of sealing-wax and tallow candles, whilst another would desire him to purchase a supply of strawberries and lottery tickets. All these heterogeneous and incongruous orders were faithfully attended to by the young bookseller, who was destined one day to become the great publisher of world renown. His shop soon became the fashionable lounge of the *élite* and *littérati* of Edinburgh. His first venture as a publisher was a book entitled "Anecdotes of False Messiahs," which fell still-born from the press. The first successful development of Constable's business must be ascribed to the time when he cleverly formed a connection with the great publishing houses of Longman and John Murray, Byron's friend. He was then on his way to fame and fortune. The pub-

lishing trade of Scotland was either dead or dying when Constable appeared upon the scene. Lord Cockburn says, "To Archibald Constable the literature of Scotland has been more indebted than to any other bookseller. He had hardly set up for himself when he reached to the summit of his business. He rushed out and took possession of the open field." Constable's first great triumph as a publisher was establishing *The Edinburgh Review*. The idea was suggested by Sydney Smith to Jeffery, Brougham, and Horner. Smith was editor, Constable was publisher. The first number was entirely written by these four geniuses. Its eloquence and brilliancy, its trenchant criticism and scathing satire, were paralleled by none. It took the literary world by storm. After Sydney Smith, Lord Jeffery was appointed editor, and during his reign *The Edinburgh* was the best Review in Europe. It imbued Edinburgh with Liberalism, which it has retained to this day. The Liberal party in Scotland owe more to Constable than they think.

His next great success as a publisher was the buying up of *The Encyclopædia Britannica*. The purchase price was £14,000. The supplement to that work, which Constable started and finished with great eclat, cost £9,000 more. The price he paid to some of the contributors was enormous.

We may say of Constable what Johnson said of Miller, the famous London publisher, "Sir, Miller is a worthy man, he has raised the price of literature."

These triumphs in the career of Constable entitle him to be called "The Napoleon of the realms of print." Constable, however, will be best known to future generations as the pioneer of cheap literature.

Such were the principal actors with Sir Walter in the saddest financial drama of this century.

We shall now consider Scott's business connection with these men. Let us glance first at Scott's connection with James Ballantyne.

As we have already seen, Scott started James as a printer in the Canongate of Edinburgh. The business having succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectation, Scott, in 1805, became a formal but secret partner. "Sir," said Johnson to Boswell, "where there is secrecy, roguery is not far off." I cannot quite endorse that sentiment, but admit that where there is secrecy there is generally something wrong. "The forming of this connection," says Lockhart, "was one of the most important steps in Scott's life; he continued bound by it for twenty years, and its influence on his literary exertions and his worldly fortunes was productive of *much good* and not a little evil."

Scott having practically failed at the Bar, became a partner in the house of James Ballantyne and Co. This act, which resulted so fatally on his fortunes, was not forced on by Scott's ignorance of affairs or indifference to them, as Lockhart would have us to believe. In his own way, Scott was as shrewd a man of business as ever lived. He believed that the printing concern might be made enormously lucrative, and he embarked in it after having laid his plans for realising this belief.

Be that as it may, Scott clandestinely became a partner with James Ballantyne and Co. on 15th May, 1805. A fatal day that for Scott, when he opened his business ledger, and closed his professional fee book never to open it again. The capital invested by Scott was £2,008. The capital invested by Ballantyne consisted of stock in trade, which, according to valuation, amounted to £2,090. Ballantyne was also credited with the outstanding debts due to him by the customers of the old concern prior to the commencement of the new company, which belonged to him, and amounted to £1,604 14s. 11d. This, with the capital invested of £2,090, amounted to £3,694 14s. 11d. That was the sum at his credit when the house of James Ballantyne and Co. started in May, 1805. The profits were divided in the proportion of two-thirds to Ballantyne and

one-third to Scott; the extra share being allowed to Ballantyne for management of the business.

Lockhart's first article of charge against Ballantyne is his overdrafts during the first half-year. "For the hero of such a tale," he says, "it must be allowed James started well." During the first six months of the concern his profits, according to his own account, were £366 14s. 11d. His moneyed drafts were, according to the same documents, for the same period, £1,193 0s. 6d. True, but Lockhart forgets, or at least keeps out of view that, independent of the six months' profits, Ballantyne was also credited with £1,604 14s. 11d. of old debts. These debts belonged to him and were at his disposal. They were entered to his credit distinct from the £2,090, which was his invested capital. Therefore, he was entitled to draw these debts as they came in, without infringing on the capital stock.

I cannot believe that Lockhart knowingly suppressed these important facts. Probably he overlooked the private debts of the old concern, which were due to Ballantyne.

Granting that this fund was Ballantyne's own, and at his disposal; "it was wrong," says Lockhart, "to draw out so large a sum in so short a time on account of his own private expenditure, he being then a bachelor." But Lockhart forgets

that if Ballantyne was entitled to the outstanding debts of the business prior to May, 1805, he was also liable for its outstanding engagements, and also, doubtless, for some personal debts. In liquidation of these debts he appropriated the funds belonging to himself received and paid over to him by the co-partnership. This I shall prove from Lockhart himself, who says that "Ballantyne's very first drafts from the Company were for an acceptance at Kelso £200, and advances to his father £270 19s. 5d." It is therefore evident that out of the £1,193 0s. 6d., £470 at least *were not* on account of his *personal expenses* as a bachelor. The £200 was one of the debts I have been speaking of, and it does seem hard that Lockhart should deny Ballantyne the right out of his own funds to make advances to his aged father.

It would be a work of supererogation to trace in detail Lockhart's inaccuracies in the analysis he gives of the accounts of the house of James Ballantyne and Co. Should any reader desire to study the question of count and reckoning in detail, I refer him to the Ballantyne controversy, where it is proved beyond a shadow of doubt that Lockhart's figures are not reliable. He was a brilliant man of letters, but not an immaculate accountant.

Lockhart is not only inaccurate in figures but in facts. In the "Ballantyne-Humbug Handled," Lockhart says "that an ingenious attempt was made by Ballantyne to establish £500 of his nominal capital out of a cash credit to that amount with the Royal Bank of Scotland, for which Scott *was sole security*." That statement of Lockhart's is inaccurate. Ballantyne's cash credit for £500 to the Royal Bank was signed by the Rev. Mr. Lundie, Minister of Kelso, as well as by Scott. Surely Lockhart knew, or should have known, that according to the rules of banking no cash credit is given without the security of two individuals. It is to be regretted that Lockhart was not more diligent to get at the facts of the case before writing on the subject.

But Lockhart is not merely deficient in figures and facts, but in logic. He would also have us believe that Scott was careless of his own interests. I believe, on the contrary, that Scott kept a sharp outlook, and carefully considered the affairs of the printing-house. We know for fact that the bill-book was sent to him regularly, and that he gave James Ballantyne strict injunctions how and when every bill was to be met. Without doubt Scott could look sharply after his own interests, as the following letter shows. He

writes on the 13th November, 1807, to John Ballantyne, the bookkeeper :—

“DEAR JOHN,—With respect to accommodations, when a partner is applied to for his individual security, it should, I think, be optional to him to be the banker himself if it suit his convenience better than to give security. Banker’s interest seldom comes lower, with one charge and another, including renewals, than £6 or £7, and though to a partner the Company pays £15, yet a proportion of the balance is out of his own pocket, in so far that it diminishes his interest in the free profit. On the other hand, while bills belonging to the Company are discountable without such security, or if the Company on its own credit can procure a stationary loan at £5 per cent., it would be unjust that a partner should force a loss upon it. *I mention this because I shall have a large sum of money to dispose of at Whit Sunday, and the state of my family requires that I make the most of it I can.*”

Matters were arranged according to Scott’s letter. A sum of £3,000 was borrowed at 15 per cent. Lockhart says that “this was quite a fair stipulation,” and Scott in his letter attempts a justification of it. He says “though to a partner the Company pays 15 per cent., yet a proportion of the balance is out of his own pocket, in as far



as it diminishes his interest in the free profit." This argument I cannot understand. Scott having money to invest on interest stood precisely in the same relation to his Company as any other capitalist in the same position. Had any other person offered James Ballantyne and Co. a loan of £3,000 at 15 per cent., I should like to have heard Scott's exclamation. Scott was not entitled to impose an annual charge of 15 per cent. on his partner, whilst by his own admission they could have procured the money from the banks at 6 or 7 per cent. He made the advance as a banker, and he ought not to have made it on higher terms than a banker was entitled to do. Besides, £1,200 of this £3,000 was advanced by Major Scott, Sir Walter's brother, for which the Company granted an obligation to give the Major a bond over the Company's premises. Major Scott was the creditor of the Company to the extent of £1,200, on which, as well as on the remainder of the £3,000, Scott stipulated for 15 per cent. interest. Now, even granting for the sake of argument that Sir Walter himself had a right to draw 15 per cent. under the name of "Trade Interest," it goes without saying that his brother, the Major, with a bond over the property, had no such right. Lockhart by way of apologising for this transaction says that "Scott did not receive the 15 per

cent. above once or twice." That statement is inaccurate. The books testify that Scott was paid 15 per cent. during three years and a-half, and drew from the Company within a trifle of £1,500 of interest on the £3,000 advanced by himself and the Major. Considering that the proposition of making these advances came from Scott himself, and likewise the stipulation respecting the terms, I may, with all respect to the memory of a great and good man whom I revere, be forgiven for saying that the transaction was not quite fair. I absolve Scott from vulgar ambition or sordid love of gold; but he was a monomaniac, and the only value that gold had for him was to purchase his costly toy-land.

These episodes prove how absurd it is in Lockhart to talk of Scott's quiescent ignorance of the engagements in which the Ballantynes involved him.

Another outrageous charge which Lockhart brings against James Ballantyne is his extravagance. He declares that the amount which Ballantyne drew out of the business from May, 1822, to January, 1826, was £9,331 15s. 5d. "He was bound," says Lockhart, "by the company contract not to take more than £500 a-year, so that here is an overdraft on the part of Ballantyne in direct violation of the contract of

not less than £7,581 15s. 3d." The charge is cleverly and cunningly formulated. With a pretence of minute accuracy Lockhart gives the number of pounds, shillings and pence of Ballantyne's overdraft. The statement, however, is erroneous. According to the cash-book kept by James Ballantyne down to the day of the bankruptcy, and which contains most exact entries of all his receipts and payments, the exact amount of his cash drafts beyond cash payments was £5,356 3s. 3½d. Ballantyne was entitled to draw much more than that. Yet some things are lawful that are not expedient. Whether it was expedient to draw so much was a matter for himself to judge; but in acting as he did, his partner suffered no injustice. Lockhart would have us believe that "the only fund which belonged to Ballantyne was £500 a-year, and that in drawing more than that he drew more than belonged to him." This is a misrepresentation. In the copartnery agreement there was a stipulation that "each partner for a *time* should only draw £500 a-year out of the profits, but the whole profits of the year belonged to them in equal proportions, and whatever was not drawn remained at the credit of each partner in account with the company." During the period in question Ballantyne's share of the business profits amounted

to £5,500. According to arrangement with Scott, this was supplemented by a further sum of £3,600—his mysterious share of eight novels for that period (concerning which Lockhart gives no satisfactory account), for which he received the bills of the publishers in the same way as the author.

Ballantyne's credit account with the Company therefore was £9,100. After deducting his drafts of £5,356 3s. 3½d., there is left a surplus in favour of Ballantyne of £3,743 16s. 8½d. In answer to Lockhart's charge that James broke the stipulation to limit his drafts to £500 per annum, his representatives reply that "Sir Walter himself overdrew to an enormously greater amount, as the cash-book testifies; so that the arrangement was all along *de facto* set aside by both the partners who made it."

Lockhart next proceeds to specify in detail James's extravagance. He ransacks Ballantyne's cash-book, and gathers together a few scattered items over a period of four years, with mock notes of admiration. Thus, to show Ballantyne's wine account, he inserts all the entries he can find of purchases of that article. It would be interesting to know whether Lockhart saw entries on the other side of sums amounting to £73 13s., received from parties to whom Ballantyne had resold part

of his purchases. In perfect fairness to his antagonist, these entries should have been stated by Lockhart. Ballantyne's representatives retaliate by entries in the same cash-book, which testify that "in the course of eighteen months Ballantyne paid on Sir Walter's account for wine, &c., to John Cockburn and Co. £892 17s., and to Falkner and Thomson for spirits £94, amounting to £986 17s."

Lockhart proceeds in analysing the cash-book, and finds certain payments for horses bought. These he duly records, but carefully conceals the receipt for horses sold, and by this method makes it appear that James kept a stud; the truth being that he never kept more than one horse and gig, principally for the use of his aged mother.

Lockhart finds in the wonderful cash-book another item or two which form for him subjects of ridicule. "One entry of his expenditure for 1823," says Lockhart, "is: 'To seven sovereigns to my son John to amuse him while confined.' In other words, for the young Ascanius to play with when he was in bed with the measles! His rocking-horse and his pony," adds Lockhart, with a sneer, "were ready for him when he recovered." Why should the poor convalescent child not have a rocking-horse? It does not, however, suit Lockhart's purpose to inform us that shortly afterwards

an entry appears on the opposite side of the cash-book which runs thus: "From my John, for lent him during his illness last December, £4 2s.," the remaining £2 18s. having probably been spent by the child's mother for domestic purposes. These pitiful extracts show the animus with which Lockhart conducted the controversy against James Ballantyne.

We shall now briefly consider the accusations which Lockhart has brought against John Ballantyne. He charges John with having influenced Scott to start the publishing venture. Lockhart asks, "Who that knew him (John) can doubt that of all the parties concerned in this new speculation, the one most zealous for starting it was he who now saw the chance of presenting himself to the world in the comparatively elevated character of Walter Scott's publisher and Archibald Constable's rival?" I reply, Who that knew John could believe that he had influence sufficient to induce Scott to start a rival publishing house against Constable? To imagine such a thing is a degrading reflection on the intellectual capability of Scott. Let us hear what Sir Walter himself says about the matter. In a letter dated September 14, 1809, Scott writes to his confidential friend Morritt: "I have been concocting a grand scheme of opposition

to the proud critics of Edinburgh—a new review in London to be called *The Quarterly*. Then, sir, to turn the flank of Messrs. Constable and Co., and to avenge myself of certain impertinences which, in the vehemence of their Whiggery, they have dared to indulge in towards me, I have prepared to start against them at Whit Sunday first, the celebrated printer Ballantyne in the shape of an Edinburgh publisher with a long purse and a sound political creed, not to mention an alliance offensive and defensive with young John Murray, of Fleet Street, the most enlightened and active of the London trade. By this means I hope to counterbalance the predominating influence of Constable and Co., who at present have it in their power and inclination to forward or suppress any book as they approve or dislike its political tendency.” Scott in this letter distinctly declares that the publishing venture was entirely an emanation of his own brain, and henceforth all controversy regarding the origin of the publishing house of John Ballantyne and Co. must cease.

Now as to its management. There cannot be the shadow of a doubt that Scott from the first to the last directed its operations, projected its unfortunate speculations, and exercised an absolute control over its management.

Sir Walter never realised that publishing was

not in his line—that he had neither the time nor the talent to estimate the market value of MSS. other than his own. As Scott himself was utterly incapable of conducting a publishing house, he ought to have selected a strong man to be the managing partner, but he did not wish that; he desired to have a free hand, to be director of the business—therefore he selected John Ballantyne.

The truth is, Scott prided himself on his fancied commercial sagacity and financial ability. Reminding us of Addison, who prided himself on being a great poet, which he was not, rather than a great prose writer, which he really was.

Lockhart gives a long list of unsaleable books which were published by Scott's orders. Their names are legion. Lockhart admits that they were published, not on account of their merit, but through Scott's friendship for the authors.

To these unfortunate speculations another must be added, the establishment of *The Edinburgh Annual Register*. This was founded by Scott in opposition to Constable's *Review*, and during the whole course of its career was published at a loss to the firm of one thousand a year. How could a publishing business thus conducted prosper? The sales of unsaleable books were an enormous drain on the capital. All was outlay, little came in;



and heavy engagements entered into could only be met by resorting to bills. Scott either could not or did not understand that such a course as this could end only in bankruptcy.

Regardless of these prognostications of impending ruin, Scott in 1811 purchases Abbotsford, goes ahead improving the soil, planting trees, and "romancing in stone and lime." Next year, when the publishing house was tottering to its fall, Scott writes to James Ballantyne: "There are two pieces, either of which would suit me, and both would make a very desirable property indeed, and could be had for between £7,000 and £8,000. I have serious thoughts of one or both. The worst is the difficulty which John might find in advancing so large a sum as the copyright of a new poem." Theologians tell us that the devil tempts us, but how often do we tempt him to tempt us? The money was forthcoming and the lands purchased. Other sums were required and drawn from the firm, chiefly by bills. How Scott, with the knowledge that his houses were reeling and just able to stand upon their feet, could indulge his appetite for land, lavishing large sums on the expansion of his estate and castle, must always remain a mystery. Need we wonder that in 1813 the publishing house of John Ballantyne and Co. ceased to be? If Scott had been wise, he would

have taken warning from this unfortunate affair and ceased to connect himself with the printing house of James Ballantyne and Co. The latter also in that case would doubtless have become bankrupt, but he himself would have been saved.

Lockhart has scraped together a few minor charges which he has brought against John Ballantyne. "He was extravagant," says Lockhart, "and frequently overdrew his account." Unfortunately, however, Scott himself set the example, which he could hardly expect a feebler man not to follow. John was an altogether different man from James. John was light-headed, frivolous, and tricky; as unfit to be a publisher as to be an Archbishop. It was a kind of insanity on the part of Scott to start such a man as a rival publisher against Constable, one of the ablest publishers in Europe.

To Scott entirely must be ascribed the *blame* of the embarrassment that overtook the publishing house, and to him alone must be ascribed the *praise* of ultimately winding up the business with a surplus of a thousand pounds.

John Ballantyne, although utterly unfit to be a publisher, was not without great ability. He was through life invaluable to Scott. He created a rivalry and competition amongst publishers for Scott's works, and helped to float Scott's bills.

This seems to have been his mission in life. The very year John died he and Scott had bill transactions. Lockhart says that John died in debt. If he did, it proves that he had reaped no golden harvest from his connection with Sir Walter. As the grave closed over John, Scott whispered into Lockhart's ear, "I feel as if there would be less sunshine for me from this day forth." Garrick's death eclipsed the gaiety of nations; Ballantyne's, in shadowing that of Scott, shaded that of Scotland and of the world.

Lockhart never seems to have realised the true position in which the Ballantyne brothers stood to Scott. He never seems to have grasped the fact that John was but a puppet in the hands of Scott to carry out his scheme of vengeance against the house of Constable, and to forward his monomaniac scheme of being a Lord of Acres. Nor does Lockhart ever seem to have realised that James stood in a closer and more delicate relation to Scott than that of a mere printer. Indeed, the peculiar nature of the connection between James and Scott has never yet been thoroughly understood. This is proved by a strange entry in the old cash-book of James Ballantyne and Co. of £3,600, being James's share of eight novels, which was paid by the publishers direct to Ballantyne in the same way as Scott

himself was paid. Strange, is it not, that Ballantyne, by Scott's arrangement, should receive such a large share? Equally strange that Lockhart should be so silent regarding it. What does it mean? Could it be for literary work rendered to the author of "Waverley"? Hitherto it has been a problem how Scott, with his official duties and his social functions, could write on an average year after year sixteen pages per day of print, historical or fictitious, with the research which that implies. Goethe's opinion was that Scott "sketched and touched up, and left it to inferior hands to compose the bulk of his works." I cannot endorse that opinion, because the novels seem to be woven of a piece. I believe, however, that James Ballantyne, a man of consummate taste and literary ability, *corrected and polished* the *Waverley MSS.*, which Scott, who at his best was never immaculate in style, wrote at a whirlwind pace. Probably the world will never know how much indebted Walter Scott was to James Ballantyne.

Let us now glance at Scott's connection with Constable. The first publishing transaction with Scott was in 1802. That year he agreed to take a share in the "Border Minstrelsy," and in 1805 he was part publisher of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel." About this time Constable became jealous of the London publishers, who had the

lion's share of the publication of Scott's works. He resolved to oust them and to secure for himself entirely the publication of the works of Scotland's greatest literary genius. Accordingly, on hearing that Scott had begun a new poem, Constable offered for it a thousand guineas, a sum which startled not only the London publishers, but also the literary world. The offer was accepted without hesitation, and the publisher had reason to be pleased with his bargain, for the poem was "Marmion." Constable in his offer of a thousand guineas adds, "Payment of the copy may be made to suit your convenience." Scott is here offered cash down in advance if he desired it. Well had it been for author and publisher if in their subsequent transactions they had adhered to this principle. It is sad to note that it was not Constable but Scott that broke away from this style of bargaining and adopted a looser mode of business.

Flushed with the splendid success of "Marmion," Constable offered Scott £1,500 for a *Life of Swift*. The offer was accepted, and the money paid in advance. From this venture the publisher reaped a golden harvest, as everything Scott put his name to went like wildfire.

About this time a misunderstanding arose between Scott and Constable, which for a time

caused estrangement between the two. This Lockhart ascribes to the Ballantynes. Commenting on it he says: "Had he (Constable) and Scott from the beginning trusted as thoroughly as they understood each other, had there been no third parties to step in, their joint career might have been one of unbroken prosperity. But the Ballantynes were jealous of the superior mind, bearing, and authority of Constable." Lockhart here insinuates that the Ballantynes were the cause of the estrangement between Scott and Constable. The estrangement was not caused by the Ballantynes, but, says Scott, "to avenge myself of certain impertinences which in the vehemence of their (Constable and Co.'s) Whiggery they have dared to indulge in towards me." Scott resented these, and conceived the idea of establishing a rival publishing house with John Ballantyne at its head. His own printing house was to be his own publishing house. "A printing and a publishing house," says Carlyle, "was not so alien to a maker of books. Apart from vengeance, great things might be done ultimately, great difficulties were at once got rid of, manifold higgings of booksellers and contradiction of sinners hereby fell away." Mr. Ruskin carries out this plan with splendid success.

Had Scott confined himself to the publication

of his own works, and abandoned for a time his monomaniac ambition to be a lord of the soil, he might have been successful beyond the dreams of avarice. We need not recapitulate, but we know for a fact that Scott did the exact opposite.

In 1813 the publishing house of Ballantyne and Co. was on the verge of bankruptcy. To whom did they resort for help and guidance? They appealed to Constable and Co., against whom in pique they had started a rival publishing house.

Constable in the most generous manner came to the rescue. He guided them with his experience, financed them with his gold, and saved their house from bankruptcy. His first act was to purchase part of their unsaleable stock to the extent of two thousand pounds. When their stock was realised by Constable it turned out to be a dead loss, as he himself anticipated. Up to this moment Constable and Co. were not owing Scott and Ballantyne one farthing. Scott had now such confidence in the ability and willingness of Constable to rescue Ballantyne and Co. from their financial ruin that he wrote to John Ballantyne, who had rushed to London to get help from the great publishing houses of Longmans and John Murray: "Constable will be a zealous ally, and for the first time these many weeks I shall lay my head on a quiet pillow."

Next month Scott's chieftain craze gets the

better of his judgment, and he is writing to a friend to purchase for him "that splendid lot of ancient armour," for which he paid a fabulous price, and goes buoyantly ahead with his lavish expenditure on Abbotsford.

At this crisis Constable proved a friend to Scott indeed. "I am sincere," writes Constable, "when I assure you that I will serve you in everything within my power, but the only effectual means which occurs to me for your immediate relief is the support of one or two of your wealthy friends in guaranteeing a London account which I think I could, with almost certain success, recommend to our own bankers." Concerning this letter Scott said, "Mr. Constable's advice is, as I have always found it, sound, sensible, and friendly." Accordingly Scott approached the Duke of Buccleuch, and asked him to stand surety for a sum of £4,000, which was at once granted. Constable procured an additional guarantee, and introduced Scott to his own London banker.

Let no cynic say that these deeds of Constable's were done to secure the patronage of Scott. He had acquired a name and a fame which Scott could neither give nor take away. Yet, probably, he did expect that Scott of his own accord would show gratitude ; such an expectation at least was not unreasonable.



Having rescued the house of John Ballantyne and Co. from bankruptcy, surely Constable will be Scott's publisher-in-chief for life? We shall see.

After this crisis the first transaction of importance between Scott and Constable was the purchase of half the right in "The Lord of the Isles." The price was £1,500. It is sad to note that Scott received the money before he had written any part of what he sold.

Scott's next work of importance was "Guy Mannering," which was offered to the London trade. Longman purchased it for £1,500 in bills, and agreed to further relieve the Ballantynes by purchasing from their stock to the extent of £500. Constable heard accidentally from Longman of this arrangement and felt aggrieved. This episode of Scott's desertion of his Scottish publisher after such an obligation does seem ungrateful. The pressure, however, upon Scott to act as he did was terribly strong. At this time he was desperately in need of ready money, and anxious to dispose of part of the remainder of the Ballantyne stock, and he probably felt that Constable could not further help him either with the one or the other.

Constable, however, was shortly afterwards appeased. When John Ballantyne arranged with Longman and John Murray for the publication of "Peter's Letters of His Kinsfolk" he reserved a

third share for Constable, which he accepted. The same year the "Antiquary" was given to Constable, and published on the half profit system. It met with dazzling success.

About this time Scott was greatly exercised concerning certain floating bills connected with the unfortunate Ballantyne stock, a considerable part of which was still unsold. In his difficulty Scott tried to prevail upon Constable to purchase more of the stock. Constable prudently declined. Accordingly John Ballantyne is commissioned by Scott to try Murray and Blackwood, and to tempt them with the prospective publication of "Tales of my Landlord," which Scott was then writing. The bait took admirably. Murray and Blackwood bought the tales and some of the everlasting Ballantyne stock, and so things went smoothly for a time, and the bills went floating on. Scott writes to Ballantyne: "Dear John, I have the pleasure to enclose Murray's acceptances. I earnestly recommend you to push realising as much as you can.

"Consider weel, gude man,  
We hae but borrowed gear ;  
The horse that I ride on,  
It is John Murray's mear.

"Yours truly,

"WALTER SCOTT."

Scott, now in the zenith of his fame, resolved to form a closer alliance with Constable as his publisher-in-chief. Accordingly, in the early summer of 1817, he invited his plenipotentiary John Ballantyne and the ambitious Constable to Abbotsford. When Constable arrived he found Scott in splendid spirits, under the rollicking merriment of John Ballantyne. Men are contented to be laughed at for their wit, but John was contented to be laughed at for his folly. After luncheon the Wizard took them through his enchanted grounds and charming scenery, reciting snatches of *apropos* poetry, and telling *apropos* stories, John's laugh being ready chorus. He rambled with them through the lovely and classic lands of Toftfield, which his soul yearned to possess, if only he could raise the wherewithal—ten thousand pounds. After dinner Scott made a confidant of Constable—unfolded his prospective literary schemes, produced notes of a new novel, which he allowed Constable to christen, and accepted his suggestions. Constable was intoxicated, not with wine, but pride, at the thought of getting “Scott all to himself,” of being prospective publisher-in-chief to the greatest writer of the age, whose society was courted by the *élite* of the aristocracy of rank and letters. That evening Constable purchased the proposed

novel, with some of the Ballantyne stock, and pledged his name and resources to carry out the schemes of the mighty author.

Scott, like Swift, was a monomaniac, but in a different line. "Power, power," cried Swift, "I give my brains for power." To Stella he writes: "At Court I make my brains take the place of titles, a blue ribbon and carriage and six." His boast through life was that he made proud dukes and lords pay him the first visit, and to procure his friendship compelled the titled slaves to stoop in proportion to their rank. How different with Scott. "Land, land," cries Scott, "I give my brains for land." "You shall have it," cries Constable. That night, one dash of his pen and the lands of Toftfield are Scott's. Lockhart informs us that the commissions of the transactions of that evening put a large sum into the pocket of John Ballantyne. Next day Constable and Ballantyne returned to Edinburgh. What a strange trio. They understood each other's weakness, but not their own. Think of it—Ballantyne pacing the counting-house in Canon-gate, chuckling over the gold he had cleverly earned at the christening of "Rob Roy," all unconscious that his was but the reward of a clown, for keeping the potentates merry; Constable walking the city streets bursting with vanity,

murmuring to himself in high glee: "By G——, I am all but the author of the Waverley Novels"; Scott stalking through the stately halls of his baronial mansion, never thinking that Abbotsford, begun, continued, and ended in bills, was not a legitimately acquired possession.

Constable has now identified himself for good or evil with the encumbered affairs of the Ballantyne concern. Doubtless he realised the risk of the step he was taking, but he also realised the unparalleled intellectual resources of Scott, and the glory of being publisher and confidant of the mighty author, whose novels were in everybody's hands and were the daily food, not only of his countrymen, but of all educated Europe.

It would be a work of supererogation to enumerate in detail the transactions that took place between Scott, Constable, and the Ballantynes, from the night of the purchase of "Rob Roy" until the crash came in 1826. Their interests seem to have been identical. The *modus operandi* was this: when Sir Walter, at Abbotsford, required money, he resorted to Ballantyne and Co., and they in turn resorted to Constable and Co. They clearly realised that Scott's intellectual resources were a mine of gold, but that Scott was a monomaniac, whom to humour they must supply with costly toys—woods, lands, and

armour. These were his playthings. "Thus like excited gamesters they threw bill upon bill to please the potentate of Abbotsford." In 1823 Scott owed in bills to the Ballantynes and Constable £46,000. Between May, 1822, and April, 1823, Ballantyne and Co. paid £1,146 merely as discount on the bills received for Sir Walter's exclusive accommodation. At one time Scott had received from Constable between £20,000 and £30,000 as the price of four novels, not one line of which was written or even their names conceived.

In a letter dated December 18, 1825, of which Lockhart has not informed us, Scott writes: "I have about £10,000 of Constable's, for which I am bound to give him literary value."

The year 1825 will be for ever memorable in the history of the financial affairs of this country, and to Scott it proved fatal. It did not come, however, without warning. In the October of this year a rumour reached Constable that a commercial panic had arisen in London, and that the house of Hurst and Robinson was tottering to its fall. Frail in body and agonised in mind Constable hurried to London, and endeavoured to negotiate a mad financial scheme to raise in the Bank of England £100,000 on the security of the present and future MSS. of Scott. Such an insane scheme could have emanated only from a mind in despair.

Lockhart justly declined to recommend the scheme to Scott. Probably such a mad proposal, taken in conjunction with the fact that the profits of the biography of Scott—on which Lockhart laboured for years—went not to enrich himself, but to pay off the debts of Scott and the Ballantynes, may have induced him in his biography to adopt an acrimonious tone towards Constable and the Ballantynes, which is to be regretted. However that may be, Constable returned in haste to Edinburgh to warn Scott and the Ballantynes that they must exert themselves with him to support the London house. They did their utmost. Sir Walter himself raised £10,000, but, alas! it was of no avail. The crash came in 1826. There was no parrying the blow. It fell, and Scott was ruined. Like Alpine travellers tied to each other, the houses of Hurst and Co., Constable and Co., Ballantyne and Co., fell together. The glory of Constable in being publisher-in-chief to the greatest author of the age was short-lived. Yet it was long enough to confer upon him immortality.

Scott was at Minto when he heard the news of the death of Archibald Constable, who died utterly broken down by his misfortunes. He sketched him in his diary with generous fidelity. Scott grants him to have been the “prince of booksellers; his views sharp, liberal, and power-

ful; more sanguine and speculative in planning and executing popular works than any man of his time. He was generous and far from bad-hearted."

"Constable's bankruptcy," says Carlyle, "was not the ruin of Scott. His ruin was that ambition, and even false ambition, had laid hold of him; that his way of life was not wise. Whither could it lead? Where could it stop?" These words are severe but true. Repentance is to learn wisdom by experience. Scott, even in his ruin, had not learned that. Commenting in his diary on the adage, "No chance of opulence is worth the risk of competence," he adds, "It was not the thought of a great man, but perhaps that of a wise one," clearly showing that Sir Walter's gambling, ambitious spirit still survived the fierce financial hurricane which had overwhelmed him, and that "had the hazards of his previous life been still to run he would have dared them all over again." It is needless to dwell upon the break-up of this good and great man's fortune. Strange to say, when his affairs were clouding over, Scott began to keep a journal in imitation of Byron, who began his in imitation of Swift's "Journal to Stella." Swift's was brilliant, Byron's weak, and Scott's sad.

During the crisis his journal is full of melancholy entries. He thus describes his first visit to the



court after his downfall: "I went to the court for the first time to-day, and, like the man with the large nose, thought everybody was thinking of me and my mishaps. Many were undoubtedly, and all rather regrettingly, some obviously affected. Some smiled as they wished me good-day, as if to say, 'Think nothing about it, my lad; it is quite out of *our* thoughts.' Others greeted me with the affected gravity which one sees and despises at a funeral. The best bred just shook hands and passed on."

He also records his sense of relief at the departure even of some, the dearest to his heart of hearts. "I *am* pleased to be left to my own regrets, without being melted by condolences, though of the most sincere and affectionate kind." Reminding us of the exclamation of Nelson, the mighty Admiral: "Pity! Pity did you say? I shall live, sir, to be envied; and to that point I shall always direct my course."

In his journal (after the catastrophe) Scott cries: "Exertion, exertion! O invention, rouse thyself! May man be kind. May God be propitious. The worst is," he adds, "I never quite know whether I am right or wrong; and Ballantyne, who does know in some degree, will fear to tell me." More pathetic words were never penned. "It is," in Carlyle's words, "a

tragedy, as all life is ; one proof more that fortune stands on a restless globe ; that ambition, literary, warlike, political, pecuniary, never yet profited any man." Scott might, as thousands of honourable business men have done, surrendered his property, gone through the Bankruptcy Court, emerged from it with his honour and popularity as great as ever, and realised a second fortune. But to this his proud, brave spirit would not stoop. "My own right hand," said he, "shall pay my debt." Some people of wealth made him munificent offers of help, which he respectfully but most decidedly declined. "The author of 'Waverley' ruined!" cried the Earl of Dudley. "Good God ! let every man to whom he has given months of delight give him a sixpence, and he will rise to-morrow richer than Rothschild." "He met it bravely," says Carlyle, "like a proud, brave man of the world. Perhaps there had been a prouder way still—to have owned honestly that he *was* unsuccessful then, all bankrupt, broken in the world's goods and repute, and to have turned elsewhere for refuge. Refuge did lie elsewhere, but it was not Scott's course or fashion of mind to seek it there." With all due deference to Carlyle, I venture to think that Scott adopted a more heroic course than Carlyle here suggests. Sir Walter, like a brave and honourable man, did what the proudest

scribbler would have mourned over as a degradation of his genius—set to work with an energy unparalleled in the history of literature, to spin out of his brain the wherewithal to pay every man his own, and that with usury. This gigantic task he had all but accomplished when death intervened, and the pen dropped from his paralysed fingers.

In concluding our review of Scott's financial relations with the Ballantynes and Constable, we must again animadvert on Lockhart's treatment of these three life-long friends of Scott. Was it worthy of Lockhart to bring such accusations against James Ballantyne, when Scott, in a letter to Lockhart himself, after the bankruptcy took place, said: "I have been far from suffering from James Ballantyne. I owe it to him to say that his difficulties as well as his advantages are owing to me"? Was it worthy in Lockhart to bring such accusations against John Ballantyne, of whom, standing by his grave, Scott whispered into Lockhart's ear, "I feel that henceforth there will be less sunshine in my life"? Was it worthy of Lockhart to bring such accusations against Constable, "whom Scott helped to make a bankrupt, after Constable had saved Scott from bankruptcy"? It is to be regretted that our most brilliant biographers, Boswell, Lockhart,

and Froude, should, with all their genius, lack common-sense.

The controversy may be summarised in a sentence. Scott from the beginning was the predominant partner. He did not merely bring into the business the same amount of money as James Ballantyne, but immense literary fame, which secured an abundant supply of work for the Ballantyne Press.

The minor partners, however, were not so inferior to Scott as Lockhart would have us to believe. James brought capital to the business, was an excellent printer, an accomplished litterateur, and an admirable corrector of manuscripts. As such the world will never know how much indebted Sir Walter Scott was to James Ballantyne.

John was also invaluable to Scott in floating his bills and creating a rivalry among publishers for his works.

To Scott must be ascribed the chief share in *raising* and also in *ruining* the original firm. From the first to the last he directed the operations, projected its unfortunate speculations, and exercised an absolute control over the management. The Ballantynes, as minor partners, were mere tools in the hands of Scott.

Nor will it do for Lockhart to pretend that

Scott was not a man of business, but a sentimental dreamer, living above the care and turmoil of business, with his head in the clouds. The man who could charge 15 per cent. for money which he lent to his firm; who could regularly scan his bill-book, and give instructions how each bill was to be met; who could transfer Abbotsford to his son (although with the most honourable intentions) without the knowledge or even consent of his partner, with whom financially he was so deeply involved, was not a sentimental dreamer wrapt in mists, but a shrewd, clear-headed man of business, who could be trusted to look after his own affairs.

I do not, however, free the Ballantyne brothers from the charge of imprudence and extravagance, but, unfortunately, Scott himself set the example which he could hardly expect weaker men not to follow.

I do not, therefore, believe with Lockhart that Sir Walter was ruined through the negligence, extravagance, and fraud of the Ballantynes and Constable, but I do believe Scott inadvertently ruined, or helped to ruin, these men by his inordinate desire to be a "lord of acres," to play the chieftain, and to be the founder of a proud name in the aristocracy of his country. If I have cast the slightest shadow on the memory of Scott,

whom I love and revere, the blame must be ascribed to Lockhart, and not to me. He it was who first needlessly and wantonly stirred the muddy water. He it was who, knowing that finance was Scott's weak point, tried to absolve him from financial blame at the sacrifice of three honourable men. I have endeavoured to tear away the net of misrepresentation which Lockhart has spun round Constable and the Ballantynes, and to remove every shred of justification for the allegations which he has brought against them. Whether I have succeeded in my endeavour I leave to the British jury of public opinion to decide.

## THE INVALID.

IN the midst of a gay dinner party at Abbotsford, in the spring of 1818, Scott was seized with a sudden illness. The disorder was a violent attack of cramp in the right side, accompanied with frightful pain which compelled him to retire to his bedchamber. Feeling himself disabled, he yet did not forget his guests, but sent a special message to Mrs. Siddons, that nothing would do him so much good as to hear her sing, and nothing would annoy him more than to think that the festivity of the evening should be broken up in most admired disorder, merely because he was attacked by a trifling disorder which would be better in the morning. According to his request, the music and party proceeded as if no interruption had occurred. The illness, however, was more serious than Scott had anticipated. It was the first of a series of such paroxysms, which for years visited him periodically. A few days' quiet and caution in order to prevent inflammatory symptoms, and he was himself again, and was soon able to proceed to his official duties in Edin-

burgh. It is doubtful, however, if he ever became so strong as he had been.

In the summer, before the Session closed, he was visited by a more serious attack, which, for a time, laid him prostrate. A friend met him in Charlotte Square, mounted on a low Highland pony, "riding," as he said, "for the wholesomes," which he detested as much as any man could do. He then looked miserable. "He was worn," says his friend, "almost to a skeleton, sat on his horse slanting, as if unable to hold himself upright; his dress was threadbare and disordered, and his countenance, instead of its usual healthy colour, was of an olive brown." "The physicians tell me," says Scott, "that mere pain cannot kill, but I am very sure that no man would for other three months encounter the same pain as I have suffered, and live. However, I have resolved to take thankfully whatever drugs they prescribe, and follow their advice as long as I can. 'Set a stout heart to a stey brae' is a grand rule in this world." The invalid's eyes lightened as he pronounced the last words.

At Abbotsford, in the autumn, he became so much worse that he was unable to mount a pony without assistance, or even to sit upright without the help of a servant on each side to support him. Still he persevered, and after continuing this



practice for some time, he felt, as he said, "very proud when I was once more able to ride a little way by myself." It is marvellous that, during his severe conflict with illness, he scarcely for one day relinquished his literary labours.

His hair, however, became white as snow, his cheek faded, and the last days of the Last Minstrel seemed to have come.

One day he thought himself dying, summoned his family around him, bade them a pathetic and Christian farewell, expressing confidence in his Redeemer, then turned his face to the wall, but fell into a deep sleep, and from that hour began slowly to recover.

Next year, during the composition of "Ivanhoe," Scott again suffered intense anguish from cramp. In his paroxysms, when his groans of agony would fill every pause, his affectionate amanuensis, Laidlaw, would beseech him to cease from his labours. "Nay, Willie," he answered, "only see that the doors are fast. I would fain keep all the cry as well as all the wool to ourselves, but as for giving over, that would only be when I am in woollen."

"The man of Learning," says Johnson, "is often resigned, almost by his own consent, to languor and pain; and while in the prosecution of his studies he suffers the weariness of labour,

is subject by his course of life to the maladies of *idleness*."

Coleridge says that there are exaggerations in "Ivanhoe" not to be found in any other of Scott's stories. Perhaps the cause of this lay in the disease from which he was suffering, and partly in the enormous quantity of laudanum he was compelled to swallow to relieve it. Scott, it will be remembered, when he recovered, had no recollection of having written the novel.

"From this time forward," says Ruskin, "the brightness of joy and sincerity of inevitable humour which perfected the imagery of the early novels are wholly absent, except in two short intervals of health, unaccountably restored, in which he wrote 'Redgauntlet' and 'Nigel.'"

However, be that as it may, Scott's malady with care and medical discipline was resisted and overcome. Although this phase of his disorder was eradicated, it imperceptibly left his constitution predisposed for attacks of a more serious kind.

In 1821 he was apparently in the enjoyment of excellent health. His friends rejoiced, and predicted for him thirty years of life and work, but alas! as the Laird of Hawthornden predicted of his own illness, "Truce ta'en to breath, for late-born sorrow augurs swift return."

In the midst of his literary labours in 1823,

when "Peveril" was receiving his finishing touches, Scott was arrested in his work by a slight apoplectic shock, which greatly alarmed his friends and even himself. He quickly rallied, but the malady left behind a painful depression of spirits, to which may be attributed the fear he expressed that "Peveril" would smell of the apoplexy. The depression soon wore away, and until Christmas of 1825 his health was excellent, and he enjoyed life intensely. But, alas, from 1826 to the year of his death, the records of his existence are only the records of one long martyrdom. Until the financial catastrophe overtook him in 1826, the mighty machinery of his mind was working without the slightest friction. Observe how manfully he expresses himself on the occasion. January 22nd, 1826, "I feel neither dishonoured nor broken down by the bad—now really bad—news I have received. I have walked the last over the domains I have planted, sat the last time in the halls I have built, but death would have taken them from me if misfortune had spared them. In prospect of absolute ruin, I wonder if they would let me leave the Court of Session. I would like, methinks, to go abroad, and lay my bones far from the Tweed, but I find my eyes moisten, and that will not do. It is odd when I set myself to work doggedly, as Dr. Johnson would say, I am exactly the same

man that I ever was—neither low-spirited nor distrait. Well, exertion! exertion! O Invention, rouse thyself! May man be kind, may God be propitious. All my hope is in the continued indulgence of the public.”

From the spirit of the resolve here enunciated he never afterwards departed. Hitherto it had been his practice to lay aside the pen at one o'clock in the day. Now he worked all day, rising early and sitting late, and not unfrequently depriving himself of outdoor exercise altogether. Need we wonder that such strain on eyes and brain should ultimately wreck a constitution not too strong at the best?

Misfortunes never come singly; the very year he lost his entire fortune he lost Lady Scott by death. After which, says Ruskin, “Scott never wrote *glad* word more.” The bereavement prostrated him in deep sorrow. Next year he was attacked with rheumatism in his right hand. The year following, 1828, he was subject to hallucination. In the February of that year he had been hard at work on “The Fair Maid of Perth.” One day, after dashing off some forty pages of his story, he had some old friends at dinner in the evening, when an idea took possession of him that he was living a second life. The sensation was so strong as to resemble what is called a mirage in

the desert, or a calenture on board ship, when lakes are seen in the desert and sylvan landscapes in the sea. He tried to reason himself into the belief that the hallucination could be accounted for on the ground that old friends were likely to say over again to each other much that they had said before. It was only after a night's sleep that the delusion was eradicated from his brain.

In March of this year Sir Walter went to London, where he visited the Duchess of Kent, and was presented to the little Princess Victoria, who being then nine years of age, must still have some faint recollection of the tall, lame, white-haired Baronet, probably introduced to her as the cleverest man in the British Empire. He says of her : "This little lady is educated with much care, and watched so closely that no busy maid has a moment to whisper, 'You are heir of England.' I suspect that if we could have dissected the little head, we would have found that some little bird of the air had carried the matter."

It was in London that there appeared the first unmistakable manifestation of the malady, to which ultimately he succumbed. One morning at a breakfast party, he met a lady who delighted the company by singing some of her own beautiful music, and especially entranced Sir Walter with

the lovely air which she had set to his charming song in the "Pirate." Lockhart thus described the episode. "He was sitting by me at some distance from the lady, and whispered, as she closed, 'Capital words ; whose are they ? Byron's, I suppose, but I don't remember them.' He was astonished when I told him that they were his own, in the 'Pirate.' He seemed pleased at the moment, but said the next minute, 'You have distressed me ; if memory goes, all is up with me, for that was always my strong point.'" "There must be a diseased mind," says Johnson, "where there is a failure of memory at seventy. A man's head must be morbid if he fails so soon." At the time when Scott manifested hallucination of brain and aberration of memory he was only fifty-eight years of age. Alas ! these episodes were a too sure prognostication that Scott, like Swift, would "first begin to decay at the top." There cannot be the shadow of a doubt that at this time with Scott brain disease had begun. In spite of these warnings he laboured on, and strained the machinery as if it were labour-proof. He had taken up arms against a sea of troubles, and would struggle through the waves as best he could. There is nothing more tragic in the story of literature than Sir Walter's struggle to dig in the mine of his imagination to find diamonds, or

what might, as he said, "sell for such, to make good his engagements." Physicians and friends beseeched him to suspend his labours, but they pleaded in vain. The task-work he would perform. It was a fatal error.

In 1829 James Ballantyne and Cadell, the publisher, were the first to realise that the mighty intellect of Scott was failing—"that Samson was becoming weak like unto other men." The sagacious judgment, the brilliant fancy, the unrivalled memory, were all subject to occasional eclipse. Add to this that he was now the victim of rheumatism, caught, as he himself thought, from the damp sheets of some French inn, when hunting up material for his life of Napoleon. This prevented him from taking daily exercise, which he so much needed, being chained to his desk twelve hours a day. His life was now one of sheer labour. He rowed harder against the stream than he had ever rowed with it. He laboured harder for his creditors than he had ever laboured for himself. I cannot peruse a volume written by Sir Walter between the Christmas of 1825 and the Christmas of 1830, without feeling, as David did with the water of the well of Bethlehem, that it is the price of blood.

In the early spring of 1830 Scott had his first real paralytic seizure. On his return one after-

noon from his official duties in the Court of Session, he found a lady friend waiting in his library to consult him about a MS. which she was about to publish. When examining the MS. the stroke came. It was slight. With his indomitable will he struggled against it, and staggered out of the library into the drawing-room, where his daughter was, and as he entered he fell speechless and insensible on the floor. He was cupped, and by the evening had regained his speech, but was never quite the same man again. Shortly afterwards premature senility overtook him, as the following optical delusion proves.

“When I have laid aside my spectacles to step into a room dimly lighted out of the strong light which I use for writing, I have seen, or seemed to see, through the rims of the same spectacles I have left behind me,—nay, at first put up my hands to my eyes, believing that I had the actual spectacles on.”

Here is another hint of his weakening constitution : “My pleasure is in the simplest diet. Wine I seldom taste when alone, and use instead a little spirits and water. I have of late diminished the quantity for fear of a weakness inductive to a diabetes, a disease which broke up my father’s health, though one of the most temperate men that ever lived.”



This year, by the advice of his physicians and friends, he resigned his clerkship in the Court of Session. The wisdom of this step was doubtful. With his broken fortune it was impossible for him to maintain a house in Edinburgh during the winter months. He was thus separated from his winter friends and thrown more upon himself. It was ungenerous in the Whig Government to count up the years and months of his service, as if he had been a common copying clerk, and allow him to retire on part of his salary. Considering that he had done more to instruct and amuse the nation than any other man since the days of Shakespeare, they surely might have allowed him to retain his full salary for life. The Government afterwards, a little ashamed of the way they had treated him, did suggest to eke out his retiring allowance with a pension, but Scott would have none of it. His dignified reply was, "I shall never be a burden on the nation."

This year he retired to Abbotsford, which, by the kindness of his creditors, he was enabled to make his permanent residence. Sir Walter was now lonely and desolate. Most of his oldest and dearest friends had passed to the beyond. Erskine was dead, Gifford was dead, and so, too, was John Ballantyne and Sir William Forbes, who had been his successful rival in his early love

days, but who had remained his staunchest friend to the end.

Scott's only refuge was his literary work. His physicians and friends tried to persuade him from this gentle form of suicide, but they preached to deaf ears. His will survived his judgment. He *would* work. "If it be difficult," says Johnson, "to persuade the idle to be busy, it is likewise not easy to convince the busy that it is better to be idle." Greatly against the wishes of his publishers, Scott commenced a new novel entitled "Count Robert of Paris." Laidlaw was amanuensis, and a more difficult and delicate task never devolved upon any friend. He could not write to Scott's dictation without the sad conviction that the "giant intellect which he had worshipped for thirty years was daily losing its power. At times he would pause in his dictation and look dazed, as if awakening out of a dream, or as a man mocked with shadows." Then, by a strong exertion of will-power, he would begin again, and the stream would flow clear and free, but not for long. It was only in creative task-work that his brain failed him. His letter-writing was clear and terse and caustic as it had ever been, even in his best days. James Ballantyne tried gently to discourage Scott from writing the new novel by pretending not to like the subject. Sir Walter, with an intellect clear

and acute as ever, writes to his publisher, Cadell. "Ballantyne," he says, "finds fault with the subject, when what he should have found fault with was the failing power of the author. Frankly, I cannot think of flinging aside the half-finished volume as if it were a corked bottle of wine. I may, perhaps, take a trip to the Continent for a year or two if I find Othello's occupation gone, or rather Othello's reputation."

Again, on the 12th of December, 1830, he writes to Cadell that "there were many circumstances in the matter which you and J. B. (James Ballantyne) could not be aware of, and which, if you were aware of, might have influenced your judgment, which had, and yet has, a most powerful effect upon mine. The deaths of both my father and mother have been preceded by a paralytic shock. My father survived it for nearly two years, a melancholy respite and not to be desired. I was alarmed at Miss Young's morning visit, when, as you know, I lost my speech. The medical people said it was from the stomach, which might be, but of that I have my doubts; anyhow, I have carried out the prescriptions of my medical advisers with the utmost care and regularity, and then proceeded with my literary task-work to the best of my ability. And having taken pains with my story, I find it is not relished, nor indeed tolerated, by

those who have no interest in condemning it, but a strong interest in putting even a face\* upon their consciences. Was not this, in the circumstances, a damper to an invalid already afraid that the sharp edge might be taken off his intellect, though he was not himself sensible of that?" Scott's reasoning in these letters contains no loose logic, but appears to resemble that of those

"Who can distinguish and divide,  
A hair 'twixt south and south-west side."

The discussion is a masterly one, and worthy of Sir Walter's best days.

Amidst his manifold vexations one ray of pleasure visited him, when his creditors (December, 1830) presented him with his library, furniture, plate, and articles of vertu, valued at £10,000, thus enabling him to make a provision for the younger members of his family. These gentlemen were led to this generous act by their sense of his heroic literary labours on their behalf, unparalleled in the history of literature. It sounds like a fairy tale that Sir Walter by his pen should for five years have been reducing his liabilities at the rate of £12,500 per annum. He had need of encouragement, for he could not

\* Instead of "face" Hutton, in "English Men of Letters," p. 157, thinks it should read "force," which he inserts in brackets, but Sir Walter is right, as "face" is a Scottish idiom.

conceal from himself that his health was rapidly breaking.

About this time the honour of being made a Member of the Privy Council was offered to him. He highly appreciated the honour, but respectfully declined the royal offer as being unsuitable to his circumstances.

The year 1831 was a trying one for Sir Walter. In 1819 he had to contend with disease, but now he struggles with decay. In January the record is: "Very indifferent, with more awkward feeling than I can well bear up against. My voice sunk and my head strangely confused." The desire to be writing continued, nevertheless, in full vigour as a ruling passion.

On the 31st January, his daughter being unwell, he went alone to Edinburgh to make his will. He stayed in a hotel the first night, but could not sleep for noise in the street. Next night he stayed with his publisher in Athole Crescent, where (on account of a snow storm) he remained a week.

In April he was overtaken by a third shock, combining paralysis and apoplexy, which confined him to bed, and from which his family feared he would never rise. But he did rise to the wonder and joy of all, and the next record in his Journal is: "They have cut me off from animal food and

from fermented liquors of every kind, and thank God I can fast with any one. I walked out and found the day delightful; the woods, too, looking charming, just bursting forth to the tune of the birds. I have been whistling on my wits like so many children. I cannot miss any of them." Reminding us of Johnson, who, when threatened with a paralytic shock, composed a Latin prayer to test his faculties.

He was destined, however, to receive a shock more terrible to him than bodily illness, when Cadell and Ballantyne felt it right to tell him that his tale of "Count Robert of Paris" was, in their opinion, an utter failure. "The blow is a sudden one, I suppose," thus he writes in his diary, "for I scarcely feel it. I am at sea in the dark, and the vessel leaky, I think, to the bargain. I have suffered terribly, that is the truth, rather in body than in mind, and I often wish I could lie down and sleep without waking; but I will fight it out if I can." His medical adviser and life-long friend, the famous Dr. Abercrombie, besought him to intermit his exertions, but pleaded in vain. Sir Walter was now fully sensible that in all probability he had but a short time to live, but it only made him the more eager to work for the acquittance of his great liabilities.

Unfortunately at this time political excitement

tended to increase his distemper. A few weeks before being seized by the last paralytic shock, Sir Walter had been at a political meeting in Jedburgh to protest against the Reform Bill. Here he came into collision with the populace. A ruffian rabble insulted and hissed him in the very scenes which he had made immortal, because he could not discern the absolute wisdom of Lord John Russell. He stood still until the hooting subsided and resumed: "My friends," he said, "I am old and failing and you think me full of very silly prejudices, but I have seen a good deal of public men and thought a good deal of public affairs in my day, and I can't help suspecting that the manufacturers of this new constitution are like a parcel of school-boys taking to pieces a watch which used to go tolerably well for all practical purposes, in the conceit that they can put it together again far better than the old watchmaker." Here he was again stopped by a babble of contemptuous sounds. He then abruptly read his resolution, and turning to the riotous mob exclaimed, "I regard your gabble no more than the geese on the grass." His face glowed with indignation as he resumed his seat. A few moments afterwards he took his departure. He turned round at the door and bowed to the audience; two or three renewed their hissing; he

bowed again and took his farewell, in the words of the doomed gladiator, which implied too true a consciousness that his own end was near at hand, *Moriturus vos saluto*. At the election in Jedburgh two months afterwards the conduct of the rabble was still more disgraceful; they pelted his carriage with stones. As he entered the hall a woman spat upon him from a window. When he left the town by a back way, to escape the violence of the mob, he heard cries of "Burk Sir Walter," which haunted him to his dying hour.

Old-fashioned Conservatism was Scott's profession and creed. From that profession he never wavered. Conservatives may well be proud that the greatest author of this century was a Conservative.

At the election in Selkirk, where he went in his official capacity to preside, the excited mob received him with the profoundest reverence and respect. The only man who made any attempt to hustle the Tory electors was seized by Sir Walter, who at once, acting as Constable and Sheriff, committed him to prison until the business of the day was over. There cannot be a shadow of doubt that the excitement and worry of the general election, and the insults to which he was subjected, had an unfavourable influence on the invalid.

In the very depth of this dark crisis he began



a tale (without consulting James Ballantyne) entitled "Castle Dangerous," in which the failing powers of his mind became even more painfully conspicuous. The truth is that "Count Robert of Paris" and "Castle Dangerous" were really the work of a paralytic brain. Lockhart corrected the proof-sheets. For the first time James Ballantyne had not been invited to give his opinion on what Sir Walter had written. Ballantyne had greatly offended him by his criticisms on "Count Robert of Paris." James had also now developed into a Radical in politics and a Dissenter in religion, both of which were abhorrent to Scott. He thus writes to Cadell on July 3, 1831:—"I intend to tell this little matter to nobody but Lockhart. . . Certainly not to J. B., who, having turned his back upon his old political friends, will no longer have a claim to be a secretary in such matters, though I shall always be glad to befriend him." A fortnight after this Ballantyne paid his last visit to Abbotsford. On the evening of his arrival, after dinner, Scott and he quarrelled over the Reform Bill, which James had espoused openly in his newspaper. Next morning, being Sunday, he disappeared abruptly without saying farewell. Thus they parted to meet no more in this world.

Scott had now to lean on Lockhart for assistance in literary matters. A few days after his episode with Ballantyne, Sir Walter expressed a fear that he might not have described the scenery in his new novel correctly, as he had not seen it since a boy. Accordingly they resolved to pay a visit to Lockhart's brother, who was Member for Lanarkshire, and on their way thither to revisit the old castle and get a vivid impression of the scenes. Accompanied by Lockhart, he started from Abbotsford on July 18, the last July but one that the invalid was ever to see. They ascended the Tweed, and journeyed by Yair, Innerleithen, Traquair, and many other places dear to his early life and celebrated in his writings. At every stage in the journey Sir Walter was received with acclamations like a conquering hero, which often moved him to tears. About a mile beyond Biggar they overtook a couple of carters, one of whom was maltreating his horse, and Sir Walter called to him from his carriage window in great indignation. The man looked insolently, and as they drove on Scott used some expression about what he would have done had this happened within the bounds of his Sheriffship. As he continued excited to an uncommon degree, Lockhart said, jokingly, that

he wondered his porridge diet had left his blood so warm, and quoted Prior's :

Was ever Tartar fierce and cruel  
Upon a mess of water gruel ?

He smiled and extemporised this variation of the next couplet :

Yet who shall stand the Sheriff's force,  
If Selkirk carter beats his horse ?

They spent the night at the Inn of Douglas Mill, and next morning proceeded to inspect the old castle and to view the landscape. Having accomplished his object, they proceeded to Milton Lockhart, where they arrived in the evening in time for dinner. A few old friends had met to receive them, one of whom was Elliot Lockhart, of Cleghorn, who had long been Member for Selkirkshire, and who, like Sir Walter, had been severely attacked by paralysis. Each saw in the other the ravages of disease, and they embraced with great emotion, but both transgressed the laws of their physicians, and the results were startling. At night Scott promised to visit Cleghorn on his way home, but next morning at breakfast came a messenger to inform them that the Laird on returning home had fallen in another fit and was now despaired of. Immediately Sir Walter drew his host aside and besought him to lend him horses as far as

Lanark, for he must return home at once. In vain his host strove to retain him a day or two longer. He would listen to no persuasion. "No, William," was his answer, "this is a sad warning; I must hence to work while it is called day, for the night cometh when no man can work. I put that text many a year ago on my dial-stone, but it often preached in vain." This sun-dial, which now stands in the centre of the garden at Abbotsford, is inscribed "*Νμξ γαρ ερχεται.*" Evidently Sir Walter got the idea from Dr. Johnson, who had the same Greek words engraved upon the dial-plate of his watch.

Sir Walter and Lockhart started for home at once, and the journey was a rapid one, as they reached Abbotsford the same night. "Castle Dangerous" was resumed, continued, and finished. "Count Robert" was also touched up and concluded. These two novels were really the work of a paralytic brain, but now the brain could do no more.

When all hope of cure from physicians and their medicine has been given up, there is still one last resource—change of climate. Travel was prescribed for Scott. He at first resisted, for though he had but a half brain now, he had a whole will. But, as he himself once said, "To have what we like in this world we must often do

what we dislike." Ultimately he yielded, not on conviction, but on principles of duty, to spend the winter in Italy, where his son Charles was then an *attaché* at Florence.

No sooner had the Whig Government, whom Scott had persistently and consistently opposed, heard of this decision, than Sir James Graham, the First Lord of the Admiralty, wrote to say that it would afford his Royal master, as well as himself, the sincerest satisfaction to place a frigate at his disposal, and that whenever he found it convenient to come southwards a vessel should be prepared for his reception. Scott, deeply gratified, exclaimed that things were yet in the hands of gentlemen.

Sir Walter's desire was not to leave Abbotsford before the middle of autumn, and his removal was not pressed. His literary task work having now been finished, he spent his idle hours very happily in the society of his dear friends, who fondly thought that he was getting a new lease of life. Sir Walter had now reached his sixtieth year, and was under the illusion that he had paid off all the debts for which he was liable.

On the 21st September, 1831, Wordsworth arrived to bid his old friend farewell. Next day the two poets walked out together, talking such talk as was not produceable in the proudest draw-

ing-room of London. Wordsworth has recorded their happiness very touchingly :—

No public and no private care  
The free-born mind entralling,  
We made a day of happy hours,  
Our happy days recalling.

That was the last happy day that Sir Walter ever spent at Abbotsford. When he returned to it from his travels, it was to die.

In the evening at dinner, Sir Walter remarked to Wordsworth that Fielding and Smollett had been driven abroad by ill-health and had never returned.

When the Lake Poet returned to England, he wrote Scott a characteristic letter, closing thus :—  
“Your sincere friend—for such I will call myself, though slow to use a word of such solemn meaning to any one.”

Next day Sir Walter, accompanied by his daughter Anne and Lockhart, departed for London. The journey took five days, travelling at the rapid rate of six miles an hour — we now travel at the rate of sixty. “In this age of express trains,” says Thackeray, “we do not travel, we arrive at places.” It was doubtless a great undertaking for an invalid like Scott to travel to London in these days, when, as yet, railways were not.

At London he rallied, but it was only the mind that rallied, as it does sometimes even in the hours of dissolution. Sir Walter arrived in London when the Reform Bill struggle was at its height. He witnessed the ferocious demonstration of the populace on its rejection by the House of Lords. He saw the shattered houses of some of his noble Tory friends, especially that of the Duke of Wellington, which was almost sacked. "He had been invited to attend," says Lockhart, "the christening of the infant heir of Buccleuch, whose godfather the King had proposed to be, but had the pain to understand that the ceremony must be adjourned, because it was not considered safe for his Majesty to visit, for such a purpose, the palace of one of his most amiable as well as illustrious peers."

In visiting London on former occasions, Sir Walter had been received by Society with open arms, from the King downwards, but on this occasion, although he called on many of his old friends, he would accept no hospitalities. A quiet dinner with a few old friends in Lockhart's house, where he resided, was all that his strength could now bear. He had left his beloved Abbotsford in search of health, and to that everything else was made subservient.

While he remained in London, he was visited

by three great physicians—specialists—all friends of his own. After inspection they retired into an adjoining room, and on rejoining him they found that, during their absence, Sir Walter, with his usual shrewdness, had wheeled his chair into a dark corner, so that he might see their faces without their being able to read his. They informed him that they had discovered incipient disease in the brain; but that if he would submit to a total intermission of all literary labour, the malady might yet be arrested. He expressed great thankfulness and promised to obey all their directions as to diet and repose most scrupulously. He did not conceal from them the fact that he had feared insanity.

The record in his diary at this time is: "London, October 2, 1831.—A total prostration of bodily strength is my chief complaint, I cannot walk half a mile. There is besides some mental confusion of which perhaps I am not fully acquainted. I am perhaps 'setting.' I am myself inclined to think so, and like the day that has been admired as a fine one, the light of it sets down amid mists and storms. I neither regret nor fear the approach of death, if it is coming. I would compound for a little pain instead of this muddiness of mind. The expense, &c., of this journey will be considerable, yet these heavy



burdens would be easily borne if I were to be the Walter Scott that I once was—but the change is great.” “*Declining* life,” says Johnson, “is a very awful scene. Life may be lengthened by care, though death cannot be ultimately defeated.” “My fear,” continues Sir Walter, “is lest the blow be not sufficient to destroy life, and that I should linger on ‘a driveller and a show.’” He often repeated the passage in Johnson’s “Vanity of Human Wishes,” in which these two lines occur:—

From Marlborough’s eyes the tears of dotage flow,  
And Swift expires a driveller and a show.

About the last thing he did before leaving London was to write the epitaph for Jeannie Deans, which “has few rivals in the literature of the churchyard.” He also wrote the pathetic farewell in the last page of the preface of “Count Robert of Paris.”

After breakfast, on the morning of October 23, Sir Walter, attended by his eldest son and youngest daughter, set out for Portsmouth. Here the *Barnham*, one of the finest frigates in the service, lay to receive him. Here, also, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir James Graham, and the Secretary, Sir John Barrow, both appeared in person to welcome Sir Walter, to see if every arrangement had been made for his comfort, and

to instruct the captain, Sir Hugh Pigot, to carry the illustrious passenger wherever he desired to sail. Although Scott had been a prince of the blood, no higher honour or greater delicacy of attention could have been bestowed upon him. At last, amid the acclamations of a crowd that had come to witness his departure:—"Merrily, merrily sailed the bark" with her precious freight. After a few days, when they had passed the Bay of Biscay, Sir Walter ceased to be troubled with seasickness, and sat upon the deck enjoying the scenery and the society of the officers, whom he found to be intelligent and polished companions. The course of the vessel was often altered to give the illustrious passenger a glimpse of some famous place.

On November 20 they came upon that remarkable volcanic island, which, a few months before, had appeared above the surface of the sea, and had promptly been taken possession of in the name of Great Britain, by the hoisting of the British flag. But, a few weeks after Sir Walter's visit, one morning suddenly, island and flag disappeared together.

At Malta, which he reached on the 22nd, Sir Walter found the Governor (son of the Earl of Bathurst) and many other old friends waiting to receive him. Every preparation that could tend

to his comfort had been made. Their splendid hospitalities, however, were hardly suitable for him. He even attended a ball which was given in his honour—a strange compliment to an invalid. He gave one or two dinner-parties at his hotel, and his stories and quotations were as *à propos* as in his best days. At one of these parties he remarked to a friend, “That it was mortifying to think how Dante thought none worth sending to hell except Italians.” His friend replied that he of all men had no right to make this complaint, as his ancestor, Michael Scott, is introduced there—in the twentieth canto of the “Inferno.”

From Malta Scott went to Naples, which he reached on December 17. Here everything was done by the king and the best society of the place to render his residence happy. Here, too, he met his youngest son, who was *attaché* to the embassy. At Naples he was therefore watched over, not only by his daughter, but by his two sons. This was the only place on the Continent where he attempted to resume his literary labours. Here he wrote a new novel entitled “The Siege of Malta,” which was never published. Here, too, he began to sketch the outlines of a new poem, to see whether, in his old age, he was not capable of equalling the rhymes of his youthful days. “He

had relinquished poetry," he said, "because Byron had beaten him out of the field, but he feared no other rival."

At Naples he was presented at Court and accepted of splendid hospitalities which he ought, on account of his health, to have declined. In the early spring his health did not, as was expected, improve, and he was anxious to return home. In April, when the intelligence reached him at Naples of the death of Goethe, whom Scott had resolved to visit on his way home, he was greatly distressed. "Alas, for Goethe!" he exclaimed; "but he at least died at home. Let us to Abbotsford." It is strange that the death of Goethe should have impressed him so much, considering that he had never met him, and that he was not a great admirer of some of Goethe's works. Much of his popularity, he observed to a friend, was owing to pieces which, in his latter moments, he might have wished recalled. His friend answered that *he* must derive great consolation in the reflection that his own popularity was owing to no such cause. Sir Walter remained silent for a moment, and in tears he added, "I am drawing near to the close of my career; I am fast shuffling off the stage. I have been perhaps the most voluminous author of the day, and it is comfort for me to think that I have tried to

unsettle no man's faith, to corrupt no man's principles, and that I have written nothing which on my death-bed I should wish blotted out." Yet how delightful the relation which subsisted between these two sovereigns of the realm literature!

Sir Walter had become very impatient to get home. "Hame, hame, hame, wad he be." And so they took him back to his Abbotsford, for the last scene of all. They left Naples on April 14, and halted for a few days at Rome, to please Miss Scott, who had a strong desire to see the Eternal City. Here Sir Walter partook of the splendid hospitalities of the Nobility, many of whom had travelled into Scotland under the influence of his writings. The agreeable society which he met revived his spirits for a moment, but his heart was on the Tweed. The houses occupied by the dethroned Stuarts, their pictures and their relics, but especially their tombs, in St. Peter's, were the only things at Rome in which Sir Walter took the slightest interest. Whatever attractions this world could afford him were in Italy faint and feeble. One day gazing listlessly on lovely classic scenery the weary pilgrim was heard muttering to himself:

"'Tis up the craggy mountain  
And down the mossy glen,  
We canna gang a milking  
For Charlie and his men."

“Italy, Rome, blue skies and classical cities; what,” he cried, “are they all to me!” At Rome he became so painfully conscious of his own increasing weakness that he feared his strength would altogether wear out before it was possible for him to reach that home which he had never wished to leave.

They quitted the Eternal City on May 11, hurrying homewards through Switzerland and down the Rhine. Still he retained his mental faculties, until that last fatal seizure which happened on his passage down the Rhine on the evening of June 9. This was the crowning blow. Henceforward the light of intellect was almost entirely obscured. Next day he rallied slightly and insisted on resuming his journey. On June 11 he was lifted into an English steamer at Rotterdam and arrived in London on the evening of June 13, where he remained three weeks in the St. James’s Hotel, Jermyn Street. Here rich and poor, from the Royal family, who sent daily, down to the poorest—all were earnest in their inquiries concerning the illustrious invalid. Allan Cunningham tells us that one evening on walking home he found a group of working men at the corner of the street, who stopped him and inquired, as if there was only one death-bed in London, “Do you

know, sir, if this is the street where he is lying?" A rumour having arisen that the illustrious invalid's funds were exhausted, the Government handsomely offered him whatever sum from the public treasury might be necessary, but the offer was respectfully declined. Sir Walter still continued conscious, but, feeling the grasp of death upon him, frequently and impressively blessed his children. But the end was not just yet; by the innate strength of his constitution he rallied.

One of his physicians, in his MS. diary, has given a graphic and touching description of the scene: "July 29, 1832. Sir Walter lay on the second floor back room of the St. James's Hotel. I never saw anything more magnificent than his chest and neck. The head, as he lay on the pillow, with the collar of his shirt thrown back, seemed but slightly to swell above the throat. He was calm, but never collected, during the time he was in Jermyn Street. Still, he either imagined himself in the steamboat or the noise of the carriages in the street brought up the last election at Jedburgh, where he had been pelted.

"His constant yearning to return to Abbotsford at last caused Sir Henry Halford, Dr. Holland, and myself to consent to his removal. It was on

a calm, clear evening on the 7th of July, 1832, that every preparation was made. He sat in the armchair facing the window, which permitted the last rays of the setting sun to fall on his white uncovered head. He suffered himself to be lifted into his carriage which was in the street. A crowd had gathered round it, and I observed that more than one gentleman walked his horse up and down to gaze on the wreck of the author of 'Waverley.' His children were all deeply affected. Thus, surrounded by those nearest to him, he appeared, while yet alive, to be carried to his tomb; for such was the effect on my mind of the long procession of mourning friends."

Sixty-six years have run their course since the events here recorded befel; sixty-four since the record was made. All the individuals connected with that scene, including the recorder himself, have passed into the Beyond.

The invalid remained unconscious during his sea voyage to Edinburgh, and throughout the two nights he rested there. Early in the morning of the 11th July, Sir Walter, in the same torpid state, was again placed in his carriage and began his last journey to Abbotsford. During the first two stages of the journey he remained unconscious, but, as he entered the valley of the Gala, he began to gaze about him and faintly to recognise the



familiar landscape. Presently he murmured a name or two, "Gala Water, surely, Buckholm, Torwoodlee." To his present situation might well be applied the exquisite words which he indited on another melancholy occasion :—

With *listless* look along the plain  
I see Tweed's silver current glide.  
And *coldly* mark the holy fane  
Of Melrose rise in ruined pride.

The quiet lake, the balmy air,  
The hill, the stream, the tower, the tree,  
Are they still such as once they were,  
Or is the dreary change in me ?

Few lines are more pathetic than the description of Sir Walter's excitement when his home was almost reached. When the hill at Ladhope was rounded, and the outlines of the Eldons burst upon his vision, and at length his own towers at the distance of a mile, his gradually advancing excitement was well-nigh too much for him. At the first glimpse of Abbotsford he sprang up with a cry of delight, for he, after all, like Goethe, "beatus ille," was to die at home.

Laidlaw was waiting in the hall to receive his dying master. When Sir Walter caught sight of him he exclaimed, "Ha! Willie Laidlaw. Oh, man, how often have I thought of you!" They lifted him into the dining-room, where his bed

was prepared. The dogs assembled about his knees, and began to fawn upon him and lick his hands. He alternately sobbed and smiled over them until stupor fell again upon him. He slept soundly that night, and awoke in the morning calm and collected. At noon Lockhart and Laidlaw wheeled him in a bath-chair over the mossy lawn, and through his favourite rose garden, then in full bloom. At his own desire they next wheeled him through his own rooms, and he kept saying as he moved, "I have seen much, but nothing like my ain house; give me one turn more."

Next day he desired Lockhart to read to him; and upon being asked from what book, he observed: "Need you ask? There is but one." Lockhart read the fourteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel; he listened with mild devotion, and said, when he had done, "Well, this is great comfort; I have followed you distinctly, and I feel as if I were yet to be myself again."

On another occasion Sir Walter desired Lockhart to read Crabbe to him. "I brought," says Lockhart, "the first volume of his old favourite that I could lay hand on, and turned to what I remembered as one of his passages in it—the description of the players of the Burgh." As Lockhart read Scott exclaimed, "Capital, excellent, very good; Crabbe has lost nothing, better and

better; but how will poor Terry endure these cuts?" "I went on," says Lockhart, "with the poet's terrible sarcasms upon the theatrical life, and he listened eagerly, muttering, 'Honest Dan; Dan won't like this.' At length I reached these lines:—

'Sad happy race, soon raised and soon depressed,  
Your days all passed in jeopardy and jest;  
Poor without prudence, with afflictions vain,  
Not warned by misery, nor enriched by gain.'

'Shut the book,' said Sir Walter, 'I can't stand more of this; it will touch Terry to the very quick.' "

A few days afterwards he suddenly threw aside his plaid, with which they had covered him in the chair, saying, "This is sad idleness; I shall forget what I have been thinking about if I don't set it down now. Take me into my room, and fetch me the keys of my desk." They wheeled him through the hall into the library. They seated him at his desk, placed writing materials before him. He smiled and thanked them, saying, "Now give me my pen, and leave me a little to myself." Mrs. Lockhart put a pen into his hand, but it fell from his paralysed fingers. Scott was to write no more. He sank back among his pillows in silent tears. Shortly afterwards he fell into a slumber. When he awoke, Laidlaw

said to Lockhart, "Sir Walter has had a little repose." "No, Willie," said Scott, "no repose for Sir Walter but the grave." The tears once more rolled down his cheeks. "Friends," said he, "don't let me expose myself, get me to bed." They put him to bed, and from it he never rose again.

With this scene ended the last glimmer of the intellectual lamp. The remaining few days of his existence were spent in a state almost too painful for description; reminding us of the latter end of poor Swift.

Deliriums and delusions followed in quick succession. The one moment he fancied himself as Sheriff dispensing justice from the Bench, the next giving Tom Purdie orders anent the planting of forest trees. Anon he recited sublime snatches from Isaiah and the Book of Job, from the Scottish Psalms and the Romish Litany.

Next morning he awoke from those troubled dreams, conscious and composed. He told Nicholson to bring Lockhart instantly to his side, and when his son-in-law came he said to him, "Lockhart, I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man; be virtuous; be religious; be a good man. Nothing else will give any comfort when you come to lie here." He paused, and Lockhart said, "Shall I send for

Sophia and Anne?" "No," he replied, "don't disturb them. Poor souls, I know they were up all night. God bless you all." He then fell into a deep, unconscious slumber from which he never awoke, except for a moment on the arrival of his sons, who had been summoned in haste to witness the closing scene.

On the 21st of September, 1832, a lovely autumn day, with every window open, and the ripple of the Tweed over its pebbles distinctly audible in his dying chamber, Sir Walter breathed his last, and his eldest son kissed and closed his eyes.

Five days afterwards a large troop of friends—a splendid and representative company—followed him in mournful silence to his last mansion in Dryburgh Abbey.

So lived and died Walter Scott, the greatest novelist whom Europe has produced.

## THE IMMORTAL.

WALTER SCOTT, our greatest national writer, was a many-sided genius. He possessed a combination of qualities never exceeded by man, and not likely to be seen again on earth. He stood in the front rank both as a poet and as a novelist—a combination as charming as it is rare.

Scott's youthful environment, whether accidentally or contrived, contributed powerfully to fit him for the peculiar position which he was destined to occupy in the world of romance. He was happy in his parentage and condition of life. In the home of his childhood there was neither the domestic oppression which sours, nor the over-indulgence which enervates. Scott was taught the realities of life through the ministry of pain. Milton's blindness exalted his poetry, Beethoven's deafness deepened his genius, and Scott's painful lameness in childhood made him *feel*—the best preparation for after-*thinking*. How different with the luxurious lordling, "who lives only to burn cigars and gunpowder, and never touches reality except in the hunting field."

Young Scott had a godly upbringing, which influenced his whole after life. This explains why, at Abbotsford, he delighted to stroll out after dinner on a summer evening, and listen to the plaintive music and primitive worship emanating from the humble dwelling of his old coachman, Peter Matheson. The plaintive music and primitive worship Sir Walter had learned and loved in the home of his childhood. To his early religious training the world is also indebted for the beautiful and *apropos* scriptural quotations, which, like gems, are scattered through his works.

The scenery and surroundings also of his boyish days at Sandy Know, the circle into which he was thrown there, with its strange Jacobite leanings and the recital of those tales of border feud and chivalry to which he listened around the ingle neuke, all tended to develop and give direction to his genius, inspiring his young soul with the spirit of romance.

Like every great man, he was self-educated in every branch of knowledge, which afterwards he turned to account in the works of his genius. It must be confessed, however, that young Scott *did* learn theology in his intellectual wrestlings with his tutor Dominie Mitchell, "who furnished him with many a screed of doctrine for the Rev. Peter

Proudfoot, Master Nehemiah Holdenough, and other lights of the Covenant."

Scott's accidental Chamber education made him an excellent man of business, a rapid writer and splendid copyist, which rendered him yeoman service in after years.

In his advocate days, Scott's time being very much at his own disposal, he made pilgrimages with his old friend the Sheriff into the Highlands in search of legends and traditionary relics. "He was makin' himsell a' the time," says his companion, "but he didne ken, maybe, what he was about till years had passed. At first he thought o' little, I dare say, but the queerness and the fun." No idea of the brilliant future had yet come to Scott. So far indeed was he from foreseeing his own original career as the greatest writer of the age that his first attempt as an author, at the age of twenty-five, was more of the nature of a practical joke than a serious venture. Nevertheless in his raids with the Sheriff he managed to gather a conglomerate mass of striking historical narrative, which he carefully treasured like an ignorant gamester, who keeps up a good hand till he knows how to play it.

Regarding these raids, Carlyle says: "They evince satisfactorily, though in a rude manner, that in those days young advocates, and Scott like



the rest of them, were *alive* and *alert*—whisky sometimes preponderating.” The inference is that Scott, like the rest of the young advocates of his day, was slightly addicted to Bacchus. That insinuation is not quite fair on the part of Carlyle. Scott, a rollicking young advocate on the loose in search of ballad literature, had to adapt himself to the idiosyncracies of the primitive people among whom he sojourned. He might once or twice be overtaken in liquor from imbibing “Tartan Toddy,” without being addicted to it. However, be that as it may, in middle-life no man was more temperate than Scott. In an age of conviviality and hard drinking, which gave point to Byron’s malicious epigram, “Man being reasonable must get drunk,” Scott detested every sort of intemperance. “Depend upon it,” said he, “of all vices, drinking is the most incompatible with greatness.” Looking at his careless and jovial aspect over a glass of champagne at dinner with congenial friends, one might suppose him a “*bon vivant*,” yet none ever depended less for enjoyment on the mere pleasures of the table.

Concerning Scott’s religion—it is difficult to define, and we may say of it what he himself said of Cromwell’s :—“His religion must always be a matter of much doubt, and probably of

doubt which he himself could hardly have cleared up." We shall probably judge Scott most truly if we suppose that his religion was the basis of all religion — "reverence and godly fear." Carlyle says that "Scott all his days was an Episcopalian Dissenter in Scotland." He is mistaken. In his youth Scott worshipped with his parents in the parish church of Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh. In his manhood he was ordained on the 5th March, 1806, in the parish church of Duddingston, an Elder of the Church of Scotland. In 1806, and again in 1807, Scott sat as a representative Elder for the Burgh of Selkirk in the General Assembly of the National Church of Scotland. It is true that Scott had sittings from 1810 until 1823 in St. George's Episcopal Church, Edinburgh, where he occasionally worshipped, where his daughters were confirmed, and where Sophia was married to Lockhart. This was probably to please Mrs. Scott, who was of French extraction and attached to the Church of England; and not, as has been hinted, that Scott, when he became aristocratic, thought with Charles II. that "Episcopacy was the only religion fit for a gentleman." There is no proof that Scott ever abandoned the Church of Scotland in which he was an Elder; or was ever confirmed as an "Episcopalian Dissenter in

Scotland," as Lockhart and Carlyle would have us to believe. I regret, however, that Sir Walter in his *later* years, like Lockhart and Carlyle, seldom, if ever, went to any church. Be that as it may, no Scotsman of his time was more indebted to Presbyterianism than Walter Scott. The early religious influences he imbibed in the bosom of the Scottish Church imbued his whole after life, and helped in no small degree to make him the man he was—the Walter Scott we know and love.

Closely allied with Scott's religion was his purity of life. "His behaviour through life was marked by undeviating integrity and purity, inso-much that no scandalous whisper has ever yet circulated against him." From his unbounded popularity, he probably, like Marlborough, encountered many temptations to intrigue, but his innate purity shielded him from all such follies. Walter Scott wore throughout the "white flower of a blameless life." Of all the legacies which he has bequeathed to humanity none is more precious than the stainlessness of his character and the purity of his life.

Another pleasing trait in Scott's character was the genial relationship in which he stood to his contemporaries in the world of letters. He was

on the most intimate terms of friendship with them all—with Goethe, Byron, Wordsworth, Southey, Campbell, Crabbe, and Moore. He dearly loved them, and was their trusted friend and confidant. His career was a perfect contrast to the quarrels of authors in the Augustine age of English literature.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of Scott was the catholicity of his sympathy and kindness. If ever the principle of kindness was incarnated in a mere man, that man was Scott. Legions of young writers in every country of the world sent manuscripts to the great novelist for revision and publication. Many of these young authors he guided with his counsel and financed with his gold. His kindliness, indeed, made him but a too indulgent critic, and his high appreciation of the writings of these young aspirants to literary fame was one of the causes of the financial disaster that overwhelmed him. Constable knew to his cost how indulgent Scott was to inferior writers, for when the author of “Waverley” persuaded him to publish, he said he always liked Scott’s ain bairns, but not those of his fostering. The number of *littérateurs* whom Scott assisted *financially* were legion.

“People make me,” says Sir Walter, “the

oddest requests. It is not unusual for an Oxonian or Cantab, who has outrun his allowance, and of whom I know nothing, to apply to me for the loan of £20, £30, or £100. I begin to find, like Joseph Surface, that a good character is inconvenient." This reminds us of the dissipated *littérateur* who, applying to Jerrold for money, said, "You know, Jerrold, we both row in the same boat." "Aye," said Jerrold, "but, thank God, with different sculls."

Scott's catholicity of kindness, however, was not confined to the human race.

His dogs and horses are as faithfully and effectively portrayed as are his heroes and heroines. We have the terrier Wasp and the hound Roswal; the cow Bruckie and the faithful horse Gustavus, who long carried, and at last clothed, "the immortal limbs of Sir Dougald Dalgetty of Drumhwacket."

What a tender heart Sir Walter must have had, who, when his dog Camp died, excused himself from a dinner engagement on account of the death of an old friend! Yet all this kindness of nature was closely allied with an unfortunate weakness, which Carlyle has passed over in silence. Although Scott loved and had faith in man *individually*, he had no faith in man *collectively*, which is next to trust in God. In this Scott

somewhat reminds us of Swift, who, although he loved Pope and Addison, Harley and St. John, yet hated the animal called *Man*. I ascribe Scott's lack of faith in the progress of humanity to his early Jacobite training.

Having traced the development of this mighty genius, and the minor influences which inspired it, we shall now glance at the services which Scott has rendered to humanity, and which entitle him to immortality.

By a singular coincidence Scott first appeared before the public as an author the very year in which Burns died, as if Nature had intended that the Scottish chain of poetic inspiration should not be broken. He is not, however, one of the great original masters of song.

In poetry, Scott is the modern representative of the Homeric school. He is our Scottish Homer. Although Scott and Homer lived so far apart in time and place, they had much in common. Both were poets of action more than character. Both were pictorial and heroic poets—the greatest portrayers of battle scenes of all times. Instead of becoming poets, Scott and Homer, had it not been for the blindness of the one and the lameness of the other, would probably have joined what

Carlyle sarcastically calls "the great manslaying profession." Such is the irony of fate! Both were meant for warriors—both became minstrels. Scott was a great poet, but not in *verse*. In verse he was ever and at all times a minstrel and nothing more. He never attained the sphere where the crowned singers dwell, and it would be a mistaken kindness to claim for him such an eminence. Scott's poetry "was not majestic like Johnson's," nor sarcastic like Swift's; not profound like Wordsworth's, nor artless like Burns'; not passionate like Byron's, nor polished like Pope's; not artistic like Tennyson's, nor paradoxical like Browning's. Yet as a patriot poet in the realms of metrical romance he stands supreme. He has done for Scotland what Dante did for Italy.

Some of his admirers regret that there is not a single piece of his that gives any adequate idea of his genius. Surely "The Last Minstrel" and "The Lady of the Lake" are admirable specimens of his poetic genius? They have made the tour of the world, and haunt the memory of all who love poetry and speak our language. Scott, like Carlyle, speaks rather slightly of poetry as a profession. "Poetry," he says, "is good as an amusement, but deplorable as a profession." Yet, for his poetry, Scott obtained, not merely the

plaudits of the world, but heaps of gold. He received two thousand guineas for "The Lady of the Lake." Milton received ten pounds for the two editions which he lived to see of his "Paradise Lost." Burns has sighed for "A lass wi' a tocher"; Scott found one in his "Lady of the Lake." Young Byron, in his English Bards, taunted Scott that "his publishers combined to yield his muse just half-a-crown a line," adding the satirical rebuke, "For this we spurn Apollo's venal son." Yet Byron lived long enough to weigh his poetical productions in as nice a money scale as ever Scott did. Why should the labour of the brain not produce its price as much as any other form of labour?

It is not a little strange, however, that Scott should have set such a high money value on his productions, and yet from a literary point of view have held them to be so trifling. "Whatever others may be," he said, "I have never been a partisan of my own poetry." As John Wilkes declared that, in the height of his success, he had himself never been a Wilkite. Although he thus disparaged his own productions, he felt keenly sensitive when others did so. "I make it a rule," he said, "never to read the attacks made upon me." "Praise," he said, "gives me no pleasure and censure annoys me." Like Voltaire and



Byron, who were altogether indifferent to *praise*, but the least word from their enemies drove them crazy. How different with Johnson. "Sir," said he to an author, "never let criticism operate upon your face or your mind; it is very rarely that an author is hurt by his critics."

Nevertheless, Scott the poet is not so unquestionably supreme as Scott the novelist. His poems were but as the preface of his works. His real and enduring glory is in his novels. Of the historical romance in prose Scott was the father. He opened a new creation in the realms of fancy. The rich banquet which his genius has spread is of many courses, and those who enjoy his good things are all who speak the English language. He was almost as unconscious of the great services which he rendered to humanity as his contemporaries were proud.

As a matchless story-teller he has added to the material wealth of Scotland. When land is to be sold in any part of the *Scott countries*, his scenes and his characters therewith connected, and even his passing allusions, are carefully detailed among the attractions in the advertisement, and duly chronicled in the title-deeds of the estate.

Scott, like Shakespeare, painted many typical

figures, nor is there a single instance of repetition. He has peopled our bare and naked Highland hills and glens with characteristic men and women, whose names are as imperishable as his own. Before Scott began to write, an English guest beyond the Tweed was rare, and now, in two generations, the fashion is so changed that every one who passes for a personage must have his box beyond that stream. He has thrown around our Highland hills and glens "a mantle of romance and beauty, and made them a dream and fascination for all the leisurely of all nations."

Scott is not only a *national* but an *international* writer. Of the novels six editions were published in Paris before his death. Many of them were translated into French, German, Italian, and other languages. Translation has thus made Scott the inheritance of the world. "Scott, at the height of his fame, was to millions the most interesting man in all Europe."

Surely the man who has wielded such influence is entitled to a permanent place in the temple of fame? Not so thinks the Seer of Chelsea. "Among the great of all ages," says Carlyle, "one sees no likelihood of a place for him." There cannot be the shadow of a doubt that Carlyle had an animus against Scott. Probably it arose in this way:—Goethe had a strong

admiration for his young friend Carlyle. Goethe, on receipt of a letter from Scott, in July, 1827, remarked to Eckermann, "I am almost astonished that Walter Scott says nothing about Carlyle, who has such a special knowledge of German that he surely must be known to him."\* Accordingly, on January 1, 1828, Goethe writes to Carlyle: "I send six medals, three struck at Weimar and three at Geneva, two of which please present to Sir Walter Scott with my best regards; and as to the others distribute them to my well-wishers."† Carlyle writes to his brother John on April 16, 1828: "His (Goethe's) box has now come to hand, with its medals for Sir Walter; four other medals are here for distribution, which I think of conferring severally on Jeffrey, Wilson, Lockhart, and Wordsworth, but have yet only had time for writing to Scott, who is in London."‡ Goethe thus intended that Carlyle should be introduced to Scott through the presentation of the medals; but Carlyle says that, Scott being in London, he had written to instead of calling upon him. Unfortunately, this letter was never answered by Scott.

On September 25, 1828, Carlyle writes to Goethe: "Sir Walter has received your medals several

\* Correspondence between Goethe and Carlyle, page 54.

† Page 43.

‡ Page 81.

months ago, not through me directly, for he had not returned to Edinburgh when I left it, but through Mr. Jeffrey, our grand British critic, to whom, as I learn, Sir Walter expresses himself properly sensible of such an honour from one of his 'masters in art.' The other medals have all been distributed except one, which I still hesitate whether to send to Mr. Lockhart or to Mr. Taylor, of Norwich."\* Carlyle, when he wrote last to his brother John, places Lockhart's name third on the list of four to receive medals. Now he hesitates as to whether Lockhart shall get one at all. This proves that, since writing, Carlyle's mind had changed regarding *Lockhart's merits*. But *why* did Scott not answer Carlyle's letter? Either Scott never received it, or, engaged dining with Royalty, Cabinet Ministers, and the *élite* of London society, overlooked it; or he might feel offended that Goethe should not have forwarded the medals direct to himself, and not through the hands of young Carlyle, then comparatively unknown to literary fame. Need we wonder that the young scholar's pride was deeply wounded?

However that may be, the severest blow ever inflicted upon Scott has been delivered by his illustrious countryman, Thomas Carlyle. But, with all due deference to the Seer of Chelsea, I

\* Correspondence between Goethe and Carlyle, page 122.

venture to think that he was greatly mistaken in Scott's character, and has overlooked the true cause of his weakness as well as of his strength.

Let us glance at a few of the points raised by Carlyle's severe castigation of Scott. He sneers at Scott's rapid extempore style of writing, observing "that such a style is sure to be rather useless reading." No doubt the rule of Goldsmith's connoisseur is generally a sound one: "That the picture would have been better had the painter taken more time." But, as the genius of Scott was in so many points exceptional, it is possible that it may have worked under special laws of its own, and that something of the fascination and charm of his works belong to their rapid and spontaneous flow. Scott's best things were dashed off at a heat. He had not the calm and cumulative workmanship of Pope, "whose first work in life," as Johnson says, "was making verses, and his last correcting them." "I never could," he said, "in my life, prepare the plot of a story beforehand. One page, or I should say, one line suggests another, and, on coming to a standstill, as occasionally happens, I very coolly throw it aside and take to something else till there begins a new tide of thought." This was the plan on which all his novels were written. "Shakespeare," says Carlyle, "we may fancy wrote with

rapidity, but not till he had thought with intensity." Precisely, and Scott had been studying ballad literature for many years before his first great work. He was thirty-four years of age when he published "The Lay of the Last Minstrel." He had also been busily engaged in historical research for well-nigh a quarter of a century before he wrote the first of his great prose romances. He was forty-three when "Waverley" was given to the world. The haste of his novels was but the emptying of his oldest and richest repositories—not the haste of one who loads his waggon with goods in one street to catch the market in another.

Carlyle next accuses Scott of "want of finish." A strange charge this to be brought by Carlyle, whose own writings set finish, order, logic, grammar, and a hundred other conventionalisms at defiance. A punster was asked by an enthusiastic admirer of Carlyle's works if he did not enjoy "expatiating in the same *field*?" "No," replied the wit; "I can't get over the *STYLE*." Be that as it may, the very essence of story-telling is that it should not follow prescribed rules or canons of criticism, but be as *natural* as the talk by the fireside. It may be said of Scott what Johnson said of Goldsmith: "He touched nothing which he did not adorn."

Carlyle also taunts Scott for being “*productive without measure as to quantity.*” But, is it not an axiom, that the men who write the most write the best? Is it not a law of genius to produce much fruit? Are not the greatest writers from Shakespeare to Carlyle the most prolific? Has not the Seer of Chelsea written thirty immortal volumes, the chief burden of their message being to preach the doctrine of “Eternal Silence”?

Carlyle recites with approbation the saying of somebody, “No man has written so many volumes with so few sentences that can be quoted.” That *have* been quoted is nearer the truth; and the reason of this is obvious: “what good or profit in quoting a writer who is in everybody’s hands?”

Carlyle next asserts that “the Waverley Novels are altogether addressed to the everyday mind, that for any other mind there is next to no nourishment in them.” That is Carlyle’s opinion, but let us hear the opinion of others equally great in the world of literature. Goethe, whom Carlyle worshipped, says: “All is great in the Waverley Novels, material, effect, character, and execution.” On another occasion he remarked: “Walter Scott is a great genius, he has not his equal. He gives me much to think of, and I discern in him a whole

*new art, with laws of its own.*" Coleridge said: "When I am very ill indeed Scott's novels are almost the only books I can read." Robertson of Brighton said: "When suffering from illness (in a literary point of view) I find Sir Walter Scott's novels the most healthful restorative of all." Gladstone, who was never tired of re-reading the Waverley Novels, says that they are "immortal," and that "Æschylus was the only other man who could have written 'The Bride of Lammermoor,' and that 'Kenilworth' could have been produced by no *one else* but *Shakespeare*."

Surely these gentlemen can hardly be said to have commonplace everyday minds? These are their opinions. "When we speak of a man's opinions," says John Henry Newman, "what do we mean but the collection of notions he happens to have?" The opinions, therefore, of these *littérateurs* go to prove that the pleasure we derive from the Waverley romances is the same in *kind* that we obtain from the noblest creative works of genius.

Readers may be divided into three classes: the superficial, the ignorant, and the learned. Scott's writings satisfy all the three.

Carlyle next inveighs against Scott for lack of decisive Gospel tidings. "No message whatever to deliver to the world." Coleridge declared that



Matthew Arnold had no morals, Swinburne accuses Carlyle of indecency, and Carlyle declares that Scott had no Gospel. Mistaken judgment. Scott did more to influence and elevate the morals of society than all the Gospel preachers and moral philosophers of the age in which he lived. They could not send their voices over civilisation to wake up the echoes of the world, but Scott, the mighty lay preacher, has gone out into the highways of the world and found millions to listen to his words and bear them in remembrance for ever. He has preached purity, charity, simplicity, justice, mercy, and retribution on the banks of the Ganges and on the Ohio; among the ruins of Rome and the recesses of the Alps; in the hamlets of France, and in the cities of Germany; in the palaces of Russian Autocrats, and in the perfumed harems of Turkish Pashas.

Another indictment of Carlyle's is that "Scott had no mission to the spiritual wants and cravings of man." If the Seer of Chelsea means that Scott made no discoveries in science, that he founded no school of philosophy or theology, that he grappled not with the problems of evil, of man's origin and destiny, Carlyle is right. But surely the Seer of Chelsea must admit that in the department of prose fiction Scott effected a revolution which all

who value clear, thorough truthfulness and bright, sunny healthfulness in our literature will ever cherish as a great achievement done for the intellectual and moral progress of humanity. His literature is as pure as the mountain streams of his native land.

Carlyle next taunts Scott for writing daily with the ardour of a steam-engine that he might make £15,000 a year and buy upholstery with it, that tract after tract of moorland in the shire of Selkirk might be joined together on parchment and by ring-fence, and named after one's name. "Why, it is a shabby, small-type edition of your vulgar Napoleons." He also taunts Lockhart, "in whose eyes Scott's vulgar worldlinesses are solid prudences." Scott was never a slave to vulgar worldliness. His craze to be a "Lord of Acres," a sort of mediæval chief, was a weakness, but it did not arise from "vulgar worldlinesses." The desire that prompted him to become the founder of a *clan* came from the *poetical*, not from the *worldly* side of his nature. It was a foible, but it sprang from the imagination, which in some directions he was able to curb, while in others it completely mastered him. I can quite understand that to the clear-headed, hard-thinking, prosaic Carlyle it should appear pitiable that Scott should care to be a laird, should care

that tract after tract of moorland should be joined together by parchment and by ring-fence, and named after one's name—a kind of distinction frequently achieved and enjoyed by his Andrew Fairservices and Nicol Jarvies. But Carlyle overlooked the fact that land *quâ* land was nothing to Scott. "The lordliest vision of acres would have had little charm for him unless they were situated in the neighbourhood of the race from which he was sprung, somewhere within the primeval territory of the Rough Clan." Thus he became the master of all the haunts of Thomas the Rhymer, and of the whole ground of the battle of Melrose, including the ancient ford of the Abbots. Scott could no more help buying the lands of his clan and romancing in stone and lime and upholstery, filling his Abbotsford with nick-nacks, ancient armour and armorial bearings, than he could help breathing. For half his life he lived in worlds purely fantastic. It was this chronic state of hallucination which surrounded him through life that gave tone and colour and reality to his imperishable romances, and made him the man he was—the Walter Scott we know and love.

There are a few more points I should like to contest with Carlyle in his severe castigation of Scott, but time and space forbid.

It is sad to think that the severest blow ever inflicted upon Scott was delivered by his illustrious countryman, Thomas Carlyle. I have ventured, from a stern sense of duty, to record my humble protest against the biting, bitter criticisms on the character and career of Scott, promulgated by one of the greatest writers of this century, of whom his country is justly proud.

Be it remembered, however, that when Carlyle wrote that one-sided, but pre-eminently powerful essay, he was the victim of dyspepsy, which, like charity, should cover a multitude of sins. He was in the gloom of melancholy. His fortunes had reached their lowest ebb. He was waiting in patience and sadness for the coming of his day—and it *did come*. Had Carlyle penned the famous essay a few years later, his severe castigation of Scott would in all probability have been greatly modified.

However, be that as it may, I should like, in conclusion, to glance at one or two weak points in Scott's character which Carlyle either applauds or passes over in silence. I shall not flatter even the dead. "A fallible being," as Johnson says, "must fail somewhere," and Scott had his failings.

Scott's weak point was ambition to be a chief-

tain, a lord of acres, to romance in stone and lime, and to possess, as Burns puts it :

A rowth o' auld nicknackets,  
Rushy airn caps and jinglin' jackets,  
And parritch pats and auld sant buckets  
Afore the flood.

Probably Scott derived more genuine pleasure from the creation of his Abbotsford than from the creation of all his written works, which had filled the world with his fame—although Abbotsford of all his creations will soonest perish. But had it not been for this amiable weakness, this antiquarian, chieftain craze, the world would never have possessed the “Waverley Novels.”

The Seer of Chelsea applauds Scott's indifference to fame. “Scott's healthiness,” says Carlyle, “showed itself decisively in the way in which he took his fame ; seemingly without much effort, but taught by nature, he felt that he could always do without this same emblazonment of reputation.” I venture to think that the Seer of Chelsea has not correctly estimated Scott's indifference to fame. Instead of ascribing it to his “healthiness of mind” I should rather ascribe it to his aristocratic Toryism, which prescribed for him other objects of ambition than literary fame. He seemed to think with Congreve that the profession of authorship was somewhat beneath the

dignity of a gentleman. "Author as I am," said Scott to a friend, "I wish these good people would recollect that I began with being a *gentleman*, and don't mean to give up the character." He also avoided as much as possible the society of literary men. "By doing so," said he, "I imagined I should escape the besetting sin of listening to language which from one motive or another ascribes a very undue degree of consequence to literary pursuits, as if they were indeed the business rather than the amusement of life." "My heart," he says in his diary, "clings to the place I have created. There is scarce a tree in it that does not owe its existence to me." It cannot be denied, however, that Scott, considering his splendid genius, did reverence wealth and rank too much. That was one of his weak points, as vain to hide as it is in Lockhart to apologise for it. Sir Walter was a man who could afford to have fifty weak points, and he had not five. Indeed, Scott was almost as much ashamed of his authorship as he was of his commercial speculation. He had a greater ambition to be enrolled among the aristocracy of his country than among the authors of his country. He gloried more in his rank as baronet, county gentleman and sheriff, a mere local ephemeral dispenser of justice,

than he did in being the enchanter of Europe. The praise, therefore, which Carlyle has bestowed upon Scott concerning his indifference to *fame*, is in nowise deserved. But the Seer of Chelsea is perpetually censuring the "good" in Scott and applauding the "not so good."

Closely allied with this aristocratic tendency in Scott was another weak point in his character, which Carlyle has entirely overlooked—the want of catholicity, which prevented him from rendering any services to the poorer classes in Society by delineating *their* character. He has excluded the humbler classes. Throughout the whole library of Scott's novels there is not to be found one solitary delineation of a really *poor person*. Jeanie Deans herself, besides being no original conception of Scott's, is of humble life but not poor. We never think of Jeanie as poor or low in station. Edie Ochiltree, in "The Antiquary," is not poor; he is a privileged mendicant, like Swift's badged beggars, received with consideration wherever he went. Nor are Gurth, Dougald, Caleb Balderstone, Adam Woodcock, Caxton, and Fairservice. These are privileged dependents, not one of them belonging to the class known as "the poor." They formed part of the old aristocratic feudal system, which Scott loved so dearly and portrayed so well.

There were lower strata in Society—those who are really known by the name of “the poor”—a whole world teeming and struggling with earnest tragic life, of which Sir Walter, the great novelist, laird, and lawyer, knew absolutely nothing. This was a great misfortune. The world lost much by it, but Scott himself lost more.

Perhaps the weakest point in Scott's character was *finance*, closely allied with which was his reluctance to look disagreeable things in the face—a point which Carlyle has passed over in comparative silence. But for this weakness his financial disasters would never have overtaken him. But that weakness only brought into nobler prominence the indomitable fortitude with which he confronted the financial catastrophe of his later years. What there was in him of true grandeur could never have been seen had this part of his life—his financial ruin—been less tragic than it was. “For many years,” he said, “I have been accustomed to hard work, because I found it a pleasure; now, with all due respect to Falstaff's principle, ‘Nothing on compulsion,’ I certainly will not shrink from work because it has become necessary.” As he sits down to begin his gigantic task work we hear him soliloquise: “I see before me a long, tedious, and dark path, but it leads to a stainless reputation. If I die in harness, as



is very likely, I shall die with honour. If I achieve my task I shall have the thanks of all concerned, and the approbation of my own conscience. If I lose everything else I will at least keep my honour unblemished." The greatest work of Scott's genius pales before *this* work of his life.

"What, then," asks Carlyle, "is the result of these Waverley romances?" I reply, they have added to the wealth of Scotland, as well as to "the gaiety of nations." They have created in the "Scott countries" an unearned increment—that mystic entity which the Socialists threaten to transfer from the "Lords of the Soil" to the "Lords of the Treasury." They have softened national prejudices; they have made the Scotch and English nations know and love each other; they have changed the union of these kingdoms from "a legal fiction to a social fact"; they have given a splendid celebrity to the romantic history of the Scottish nation; they have furnished a long list of ideal figures to the world's gallery; they have stimulated historical research; they have fashioned to an enormous extent the taste of the literary world; they have influenced the poetry of Byron, the splendid scene-painting of Macaulay, and the bitter, biting pen of Carlyle; they have given a stimulus to the development of

European thought, and for well-nigh three generations have ministered to the social and moral well-being of the civilised world. Surely the man who has accomplished all this is entitled to immortality?

## IN CONCLUSION.

WHAT a tragedy was the latter part of this great and good man's life! We see him working with his might, and his might was tremendous, to found and endow a new branch of an old clan, "so that distant generations might rejoice in the name of Scott of Abbotsford." But this was not to be. Is it that Providence wishes to spare the descendants of the greatest the burden of the responsibility of an immortal name? Italy has no hereditary Dante; Germany no Goethe; France no Voltaire. Britain has no hereditary Shakespeare, no Milton, no Johnson, no Scott. Scott's heirs and descendants have all but died out of the land. "Only one distant female descendant remains to borrow his name," and live in the brilliant Abbotsford, which was to him the source of much joy and of much sorrow—a pathetic moral to his life of Herculean labours and romantic ambitions. But "the Scottish nation is his heir." Sir Walter is Scotland's darling and the world's too. And for all time pilgrims from every land will repair to

the hoary ruins of Dryburgh Abbey to do homage at the rustic sepulchre, where sleeps all that is mortal of Scotland's immortal son—our Scottish Shakespeare—Walter Scott.

THE END.

## APPENDIX.

*Duddingston, 12th March, 1806.*—"The Session of Duddingston having met, and constitute present the Rev. Mr. Thomson, Moderator. . . . It was resolved to add the following gentlemen to their number:—Thomas Scott, Esq., W.S.; Walter Scott, Esq., Advocate; William Clerk, Esq., Advocate; and Thomas Miller, Esq., W.S.; and it was appointed that their edict should be served upon the Sabbath following, the 16th March."

*(Duddingston Kirk Session Record.)*

*Duddingston, 16th March, 1806.*—"In conformity to the resolution of the Session of this Parish at their last meeting, when it was resolved to add to their number the following gentlemen:—Messrs. Thomas Scott, W.S.; Walter Scott, Advocate; William Clerk, Advocate; and Thomas Miller, W.S.; their edict was this day regularly served, and their ordination appointed to be on Sabbath the 30th March."

*(Ibid.)*

*Duddingston, 30th March, 1806.*—"The previous steps having been regularly taken for the election of the above-named persons to the office of Eldership, they, viz., Mr. Walter Scott, Advocate; Mr. William Clerk, Advocate; and Thomas Miller, Advocate, were accordingly ordained, and solemnly set apart to that office." (Signed)

JOHN ROBERTSON, Session Clerk.

JOHN THOMSON, Moderator.

*(Ibid.)*

*Duddingston, 15th December, 1806.*—"This day the

Session being met, and constituted with prayer, Sederunt Rev. Mr. Thomson. Moderator, and Mr. Andrew Bennett and Mr. Walter Scott, Advocate, Elders. They proceeded to choose an Elder to represent them in the Presbytery and Synod, when Walter Scott, Esq., Advocate, was elected to that office.” *(Ibid.)*

\* In April, 1806, Scott was elected by the Magistrates and Council of Selkirk as their member and ruling Elder at the May Meeting of the General Assembly, 1806. He held the same appointment in 1807, while at the same time he was a member of Edinburgh Presbytery.

[These extracts were supplied by the Rev. Thomas Burns, F.R.S.E., Convener of General Assembly's Committee on Church Records.]



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